

S. WEIR MITCHELL, M.D., LL.D., F.R.S.

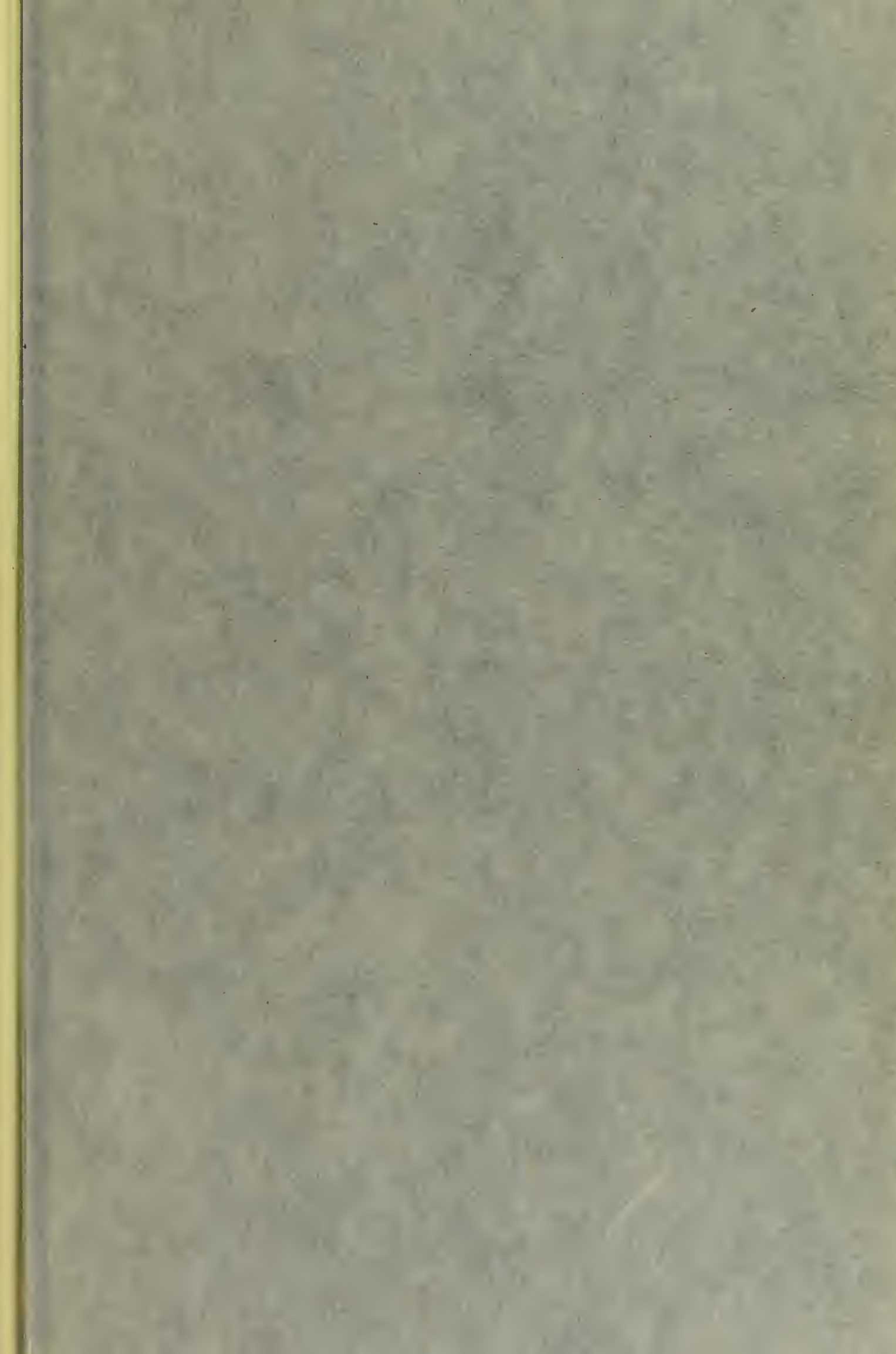
1829 - 1914













# S. WEIR MITCHELL

M.D., LL.D., F.R.S.

1829-1914

MEMORIAL ADDRESSES  
AND RESOLUTIONS

Philadelphia

1914

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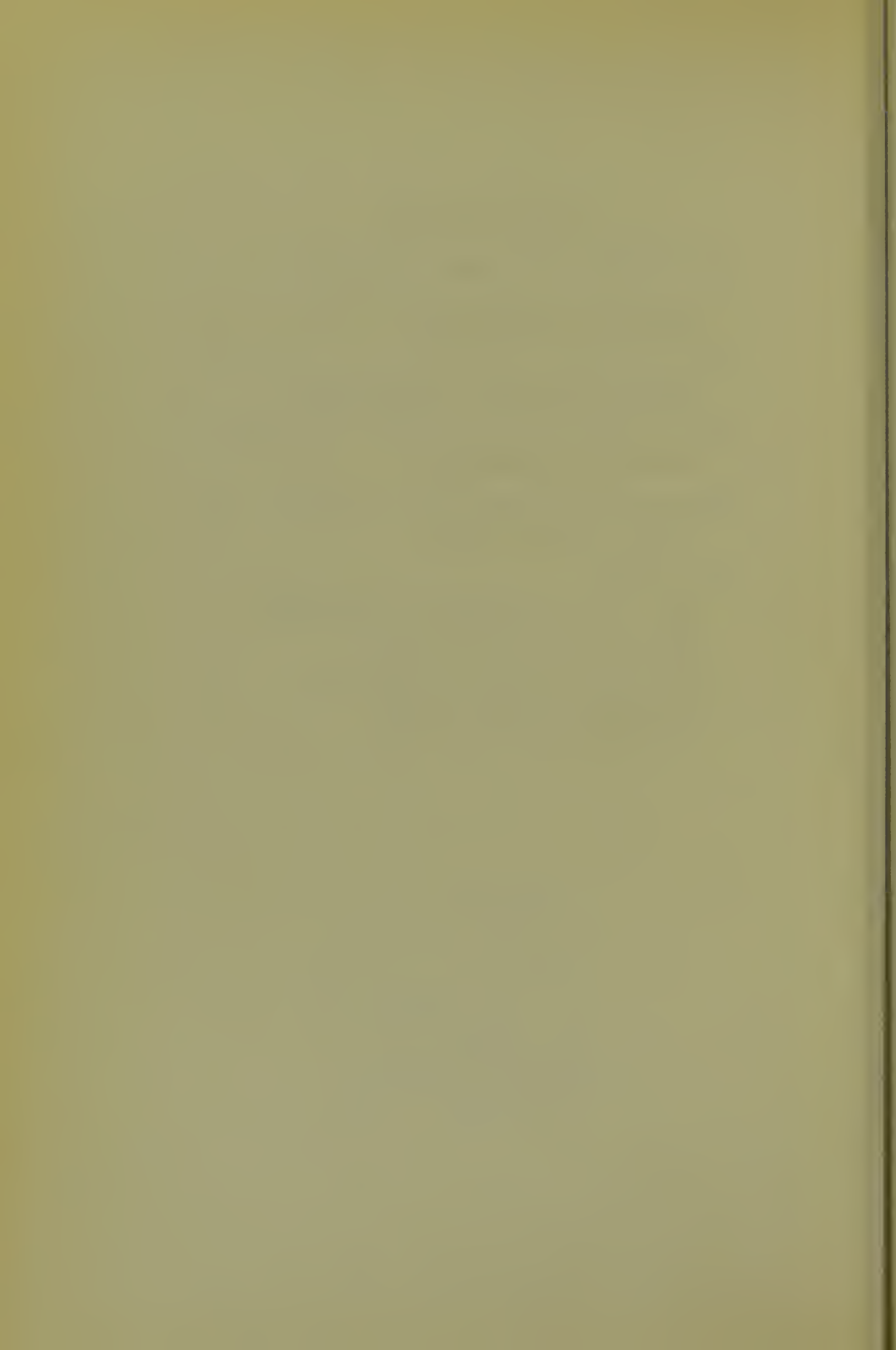
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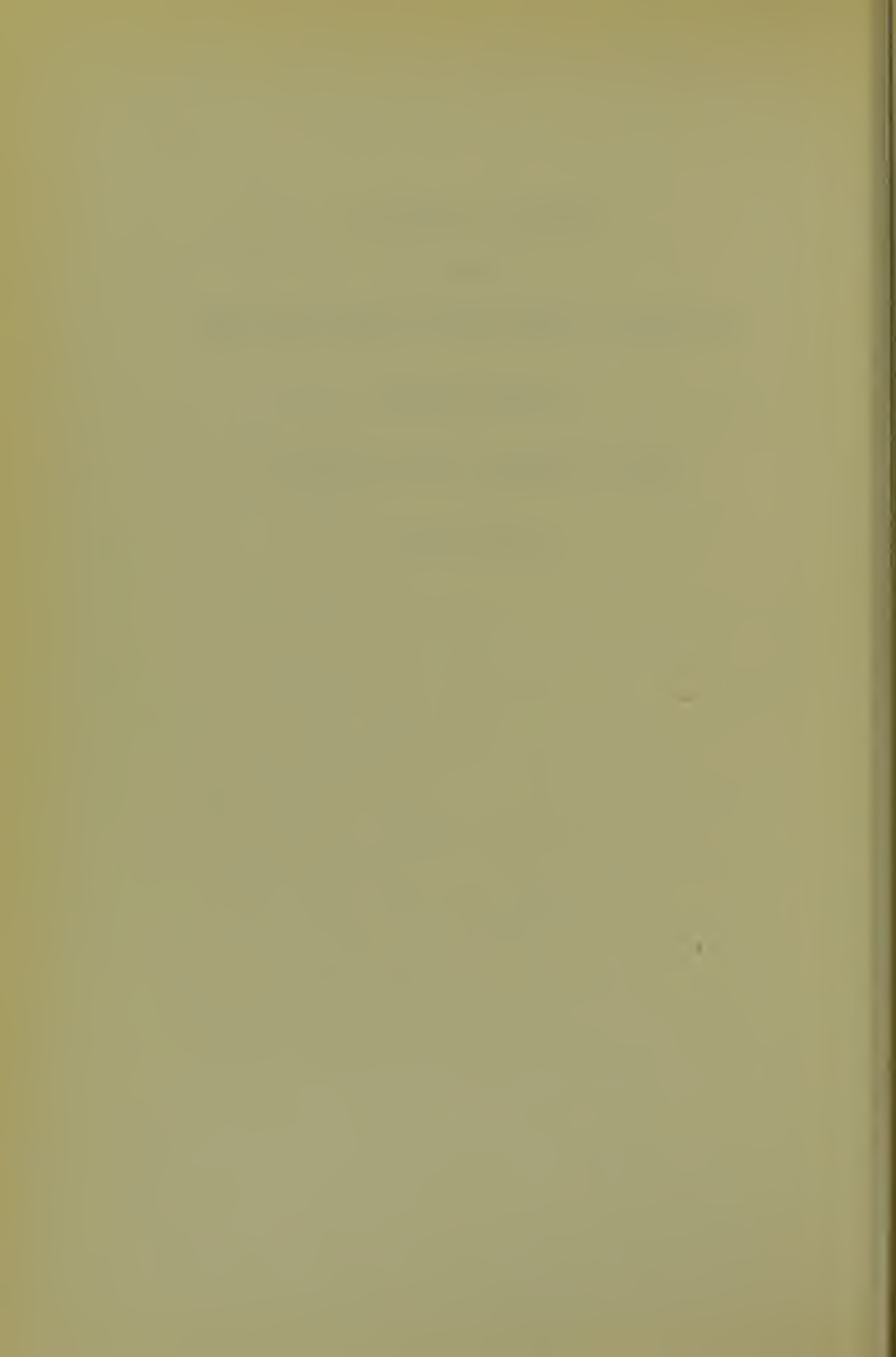
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SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE  
COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA  
UPON THE DEATH OF  
DR. S. WEIR MITCHELL

JANUARY 6, 1914





DR. JAMES CORNELIUS WILSON

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE





THIS special meeting of the College has been called to commemorate with honor and solemnity the passing away of a Fellow who has long been known not only among us but also throughout the world, in the highest human sense, as a great physician. He was certainly the most accomplished and versatile physician of our times. In science, letters, poetry, history, and every grace of social life he achieved unusual distinction. He served his country and mankind by brilliant original investigations during the Civil War, and from his earliest days devoted himself to original scientific research, and by example and suggestion inspired others to engage in similar work.

To a broad patriotism he added an untiring interest in civic affairs, and Philadelphia will miss his wise and unselfish devotion to her welfare. As an educator in the highest sense, he stands forth prominently among the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania and the Directors of the Library Company of Philadelphia. But it was as a practitioner of

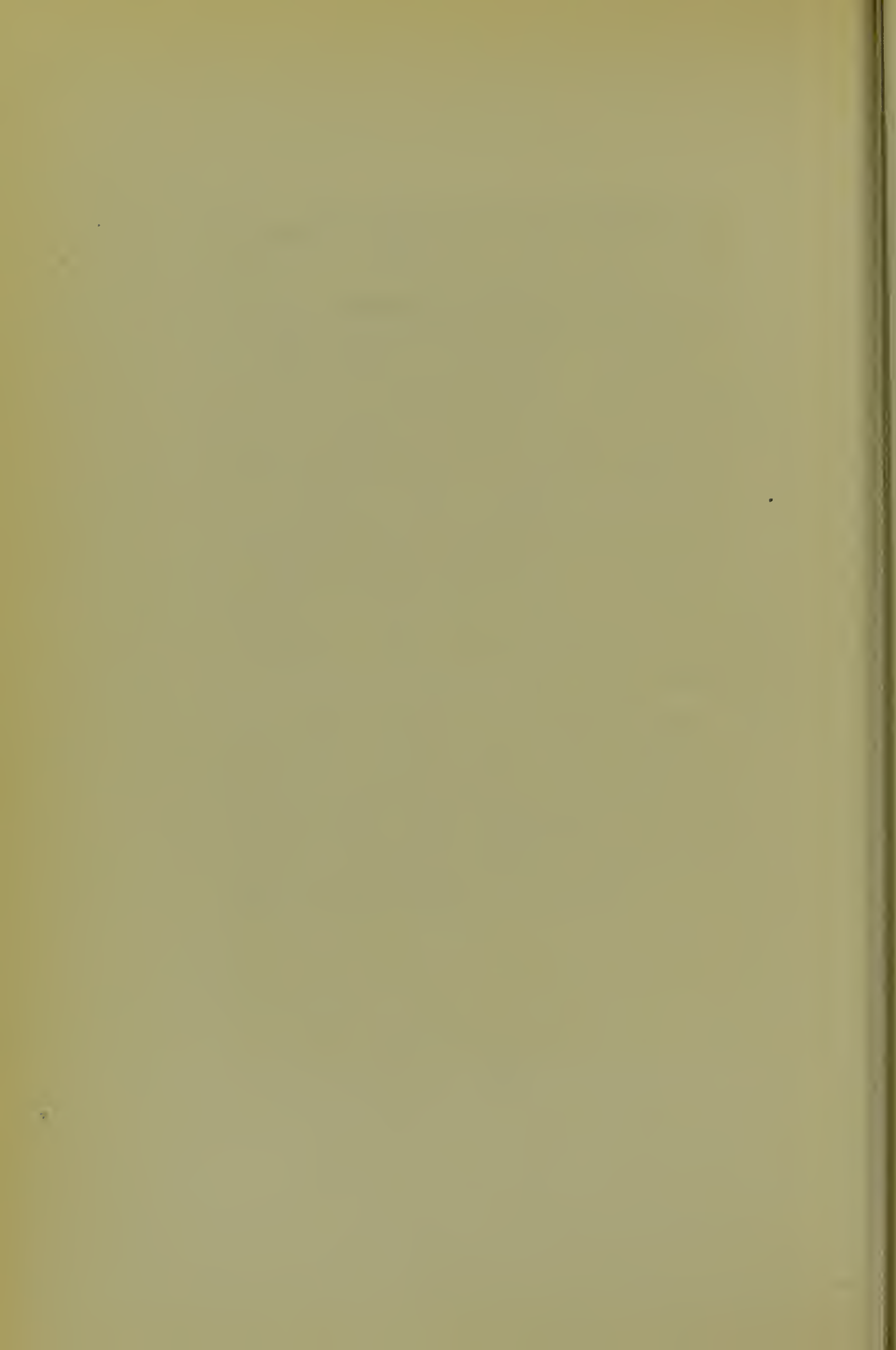
the art of medicine that he manifested those qualities of mind and heart that enabled him for nearly half a century to command the admiration and affection of grateful patients and appreciative professional colleagues in almost every civilized country. But to us his life has another meaning and the splendid traits of his character a deeper significance. As a Fellow of this College he showed a steadily progressive interest in its affairs and an ever-increasing liberality of means and energy to promote its welfare. But for his conciliatory spirit, his indomitable will, and his power to influence men, this beautiful hall would still be an unrealized hope. If the world could load him with honors as it did, how much more it is for us to pay the homage of our deep appreciation and reverent affection to the dear colleague whom we have lost by death, Silas Weir Mitchell.

TRIBUTE TO S. WEIR MITCHELL

BY DR. W. W. KEEN

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE FROM 1900 TO 1902





IN this same hall but a short time ago, at a memorial meeting in honor of Henry C. Lea, I spoke of our "Philadelphia Triumvirate" of eminent men, Henry C. Lea, Horace Howard Furness, and S. Weir Mitchell. Now the last of this distinguished trio—the most remarkable medical man I have ever known in Europe or America—has passed away.

My first acquaintance with S. Weir Mitchell was in the first week in September, 1860, over fifty-three years ago—a very long time for an intimate friendship unshadowed by the smallest cloud.

I had just begun the study of the bones. Gray's *Anatomy*—then quite a new book—lay before me and in my hands was a skull. The window was open and the hot September sun was shut out by Venetian blinds, as in the early afternoon I sat in my preceptor's office where now the Jefferson Medical College building stands. Suddenly I heard the blinds move and turning around I saw a pair of eyes looking between the now horizontal

slats, while a voice outside said, "Doctor, don't you want to help me in some experiments on snakes?" Flattered by a doctorate won by only three days' study, and ardently desiring to make a more intimate acquaintance with snakes, I instantly assented. On going to the door I saw a slender young man who introduced himself to me as Dr. S. Weir Mitchell. Though only eight years my senior—he was only past thirty-one—as he had been a graduate in medicine for ten years I looked upon him as far above my ignorant youth. Never even to the last have I been able—nor did I wish—to annul the early habit of my youth and regard him as aught else but my medical father—my beloved master.

Soon after the war broke out, when Surgeon-General Hammond, at Mitchell's suggestion, established some special hospitals, including the Hospital for Diseases and Injuries of the Nervous System, I was appointed, at his request, the junior assistant of himself and Morehouse. Years afterward he told me his reason for asking for my appointment—that



he found when I was a student that "he could never kill me with hard work"—a cherished compliment.

In the Christian Street Hospital and later at Turner's Lane Hospital for nearly two years I enjoyed the most intimate daily intercourse with him. Still later in the Orthopedic Hospital and Infirmary for Nervous Diseases I was his surgical colleague; in the College of Physicians his hearty supporter; and always and everywhere his warm friend.

These intimate relations resulted in the closest medical friendship of my life. I owe to him more than to anyone else the path I have trodden, the literary and scientific impulses I have received, and any success I may have achieved.

He taught me the important art of elucidating the case histories of patients; the importance of little hints which were often the insignificant surface out-croppings of a rich vein of facts; the importance and methods of cross-examination to ferret out the truth,

and above all, the ability to interpret these assembled facts in making a diagnosis.

He had a wonderful faculty of correlating widely separated facts and experiences, often, it might be, years apart. To him one plus one did not make two, but resulted in three—a *tertium quid*—a new fact or inference.

Never have I known so original, suggestive, and fertile a mind. I often called him a “yeasty” man. His mind was ever fermenting, speculating, alert, and overflowing with ideas. With these he leavened the minds of his fellows and set their ideas fermenting. He was always desirous of putting everything to the test of experiment, and never satisfied until he had exhausted all possibilities. Almost every research but opened a vista of other and still more interesting problems to be solved. An hour in his office set my own mind in a turmoil so that I could hardly sleep. His was indeed an elevating, stimulating friendship. Ideas scintillated, plans were formed, and almost always took concrete shape. He gave points to the botanists, the

neurologists, the surgeons, the gynecologists, the psychiatrists, indeed to everybody. *Nihil tetigit quod non ornavit.*

Even to the last, when approaching his eighty-fifth birthday, his mind was as alert and suggestive as ever. But a short month ago, at the dinner given to the officers and council of the College of Physicians by the president—a custom he initiated—he made three suggestions which I hope with pious affection we will carry out: (1) That the College of Physicians should publish a “Roll of Honor”—a handsome book containing the many names of the Fellows who have served in the Army, Navy, and Public Health Service, in the War of the Revolution, of 1812, of the Mexican, the Civil, the Spanish-American wars, and of the various Indian wars. (2) That we should publish a catalogue raisonné of our splendid collection of incunabula, to which I would add of our specially important and rare books. It would be a notable contribution to medical scholarship and culture. (3) That we should publish each month a

bulletin or "compte rendu," including the proceedings of the Sections of the College, with notes on especially important new books, relics, portraits, etc.

Personally to know S. Weir Mitchell was a passport in any gathering, not only of medical men, but of laymen. When it was announced at Harrisburg a year ago that Dr. S. Weir Mitchell had come to oppose a vicious antivivisection bill, the legislators crowded to meet their distinguished visitor.

I well remember when dining with Sir James Paget, who as president of the International Congress of 1881, over thirty years ago, entertained one hundred guests daily for a week—how pleased I was when that eminent surgeon said to me, "Dr. Mitchell is one of the most distinguished medical men in your country," adding after a pause, "or in any country." This opinion was emphasized in the case of more than one American patient who had crossed the Atlantic to consult Paget, by his advising them to return to America and consult S. Weir Mitchell, the highest authority on their troubles.



I must leave to others to speak of him as a novelist, a poet, a patriot, or a citizen, of his own original researches, and of his services to medical education, and confine my remarks especially to his services to our institution.

His services to this College can never be overestimated. Twice president of the College—an honor conferred upon only one other of our Fellows in one hundred and twenty-seven years—his friend Dr. J. M. DaCosta—his life was closely identified with its history for fifty-eight years, a period antedating the birth of most of the Fellows of the College. The College was an ever-present object of solicitude. He was continually giving books, curios, paintings, relics, and other riches to our collections, and also stimulating others to join him in presenting valuable gifts.

In the days of doubt and apprehension, when we were debating the question of removal from Thirteenth and Locust Streets, his wise foresight, happy optimism, persistent and wonderful success in raising funds for

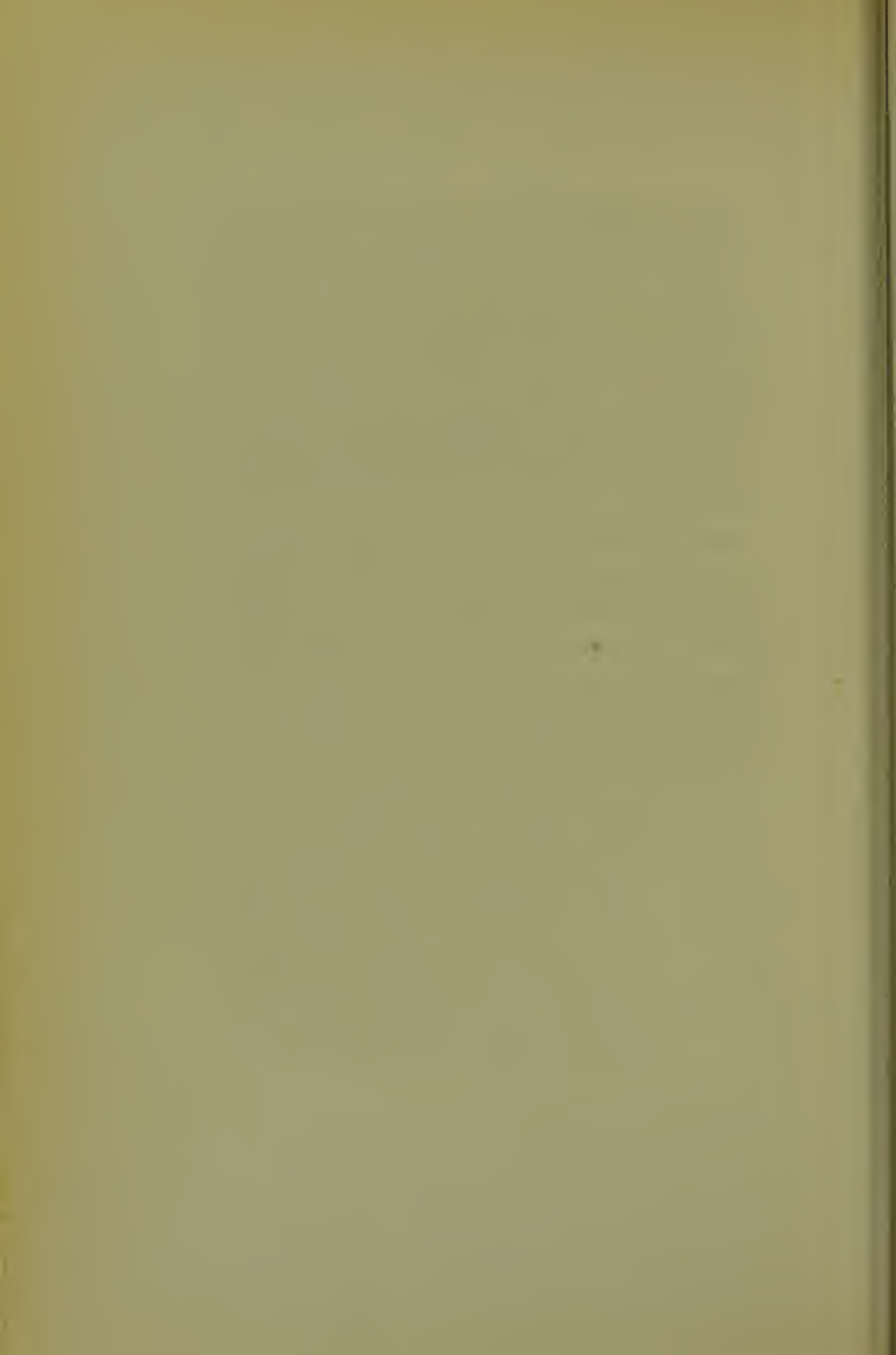
what seemed at times an almost hopeless scheme, encouraged even the most doubtful, and finally won the day. This vision of splendor—it is not too strong a phrase for the finest home of any medical society in the world—we owe to him. Appropriate indeed is Wren's epitaph in St. Paul's, "*Si monumentum quæris circumspice.*"

The gifts in busts, statues, rare books, portraits, and splendid additional endowments that have been showered upon us since we dedicated this hall witness his far-seeing wisdom.

Of honors he received his rightful share. To say nothing of the recognition of his worth by many American universities and learned societies, Bologna, oldest of all universities, at the celebration of the eight-hundredth anniversary of its foundation, gave him an honorary M.D. Edinburgh gave him its imprimatur with an LL.D., and he was elected a Foreign Associate of the French Academy of Medicine, of the Royal Society, and of many other foreign societies.

Very rarely, but then with earnestness, has he spoken to me of his spiritual life; but on these few occasions he has expressed a devout belief in the Christian religion and wondered that men could live without deep religious convictions. Among his most cherished friends were Bishop Phillips Brooks, Bishop William N. McVickar, and Rev. Dr. Charles D. Cooper.

But he has gone to his eternal rest and reward. Happily even at such advanced age, while his bodily faculties were gradually failing, his mind was as alert, vigorous, and inquisitive as ever. He has sunk to rest like an unclouded sun in full-orbed splendor. *Requiescat in pace.*

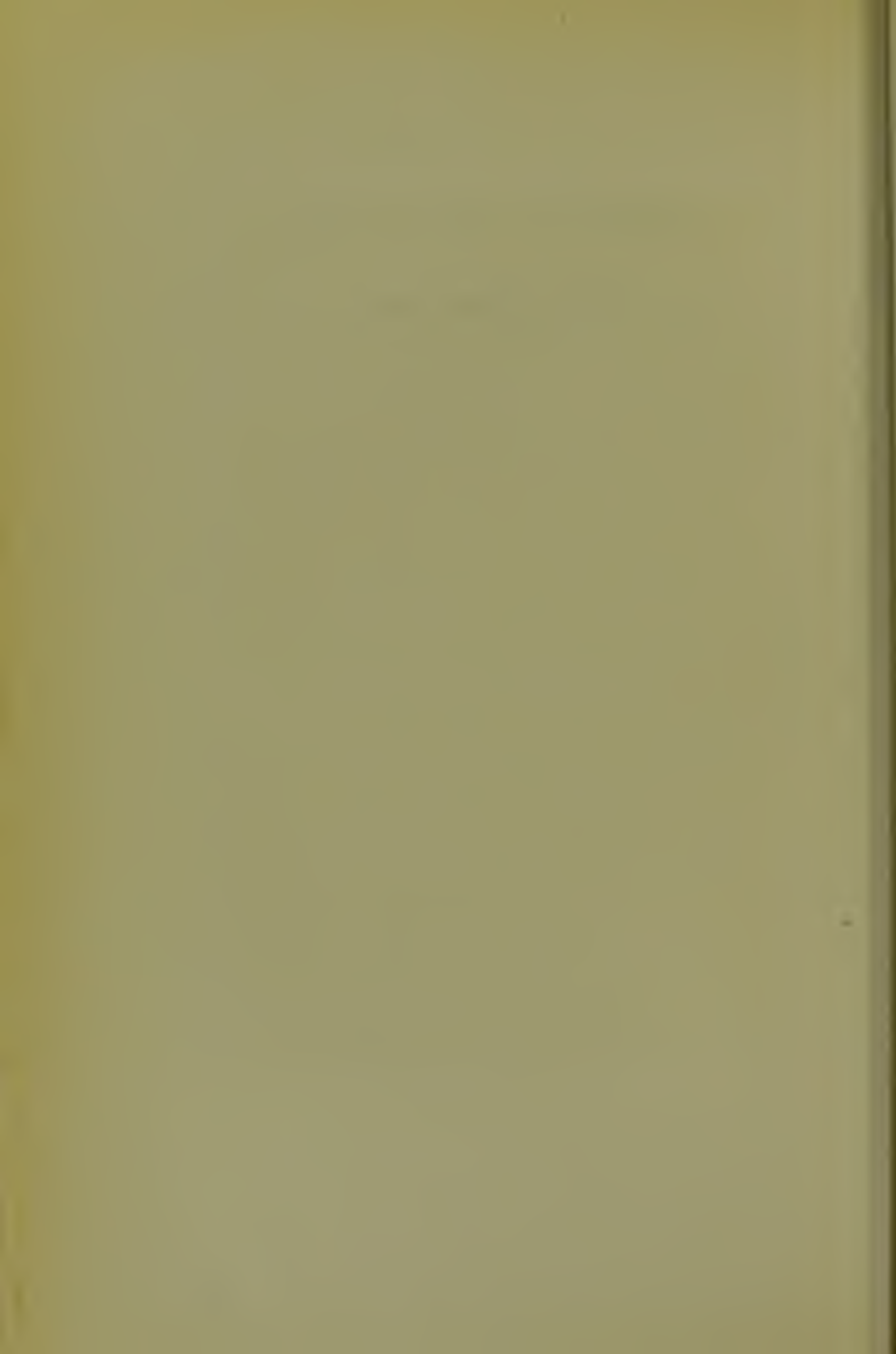


TRIBUTE TO S. WEIR MITCHELL

BY DR. JAMES TYSON

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE FROM 1907 TO 1910





WITH Dr. Mitchell's death closes a career characterized alike by brilliancy and usefulness. He was at once a physician and contributor to our knowledge of disease and its treatment, a scientist, a skilled writer in prose and verse, and a public benefactor. This meeting of the College of Physicians is called that we may give expression to our esteem, our sorrow, and our gratitude for the part he has taken in placing the College on that high plane of dignity and usefulness everywhere acknowledged of it, and for what he has done in securing its material prosperity.

Doubtless there will be arranged in the near future a memorial meeting for which suitable speakers will be selected who will enlarge on the life and work of this great man; so I will occupy only a few minutes of your time in pointing out more particularly those services which have resulted in associating his name with the history of the College more closely than that of any other man.

Dr. Mitchell became a Fellow of the College

in 1856, and at the time of his death was the third on our roll of membership. He was elected during the period when the College met in the "Picture House," on the grounds of the Pennsylvania Hospital, built for the lodgement and display of Benjamin West's great picture of "Christ Healing the Sick," in what I have called elsewhere the *fourth home* of the College. He often alluded humorously to the difficulty he had in securing election on account of the school prejudices of the day.

His activity began with the more rapid growth of the library, which started with the generous gift of Dr. Samuel W. Lewis in 1864. His first substantial contribution was the establishment in 1880 of the Weir Mitchell Library Fund, endowed with \$1000, which he subsequently increased to \$5000. This gift was followed by another in 1883 of \$5000, subsequently increased to \$7000, to provide an Entertainment Fund whence the Fellows could be entertained at such times as the accumulated interest might justify.

The Directory for Nurses, which has been one of the benefactions of the College, he established in 1882. It has become a source of considerable revenue to the College as well as a boon to the community.

Dr. Mitchell became the President of the College in 1886 and was reëlected in two successive years, and again in 1892, with like reëlections in 1893 and 1894. These administrations were characterized by untiring efforts of the President to advance the interests of the College in many ways. The most striking of these was the continued rapid growth of the library as shown in the gifts of books and numerous subscriptions for their purchase.

The culminating act of Dr. Mitchell's relation to the College of Physicians was the erection of the palatial new college hall which we now occupy. Its cost in round numbers, for lots and buildings, was \$365,000, and it is safe to say it would not have been accomplished for many years, if at all, but for his influence and assistance. In addition to his own handsome subscription, he was

instrumental in securing very large sums from others, such as \$100,000 from a single person, \$75,000 from another, \$20,000 from another, and from others smaller but still large sums.

But more than this, Dr. Mitchell gave *himself* to the College. He gave of his hopefulness, of his courage and enthusiasm, of his time as well as his money. He might well have said of himself, as did Sir Jonathan Hutchinson, that he was "a man of hope and forward-looking mind." The college hall is at once a product of such a mind and a monument to it. In scores of instances, during and outside his administrations as President, he aided the College in the acquirement of rare and valuable books and curios, adding greatly to the value of the library and museum. Let us pray that we may inherit the undying spark with which to continue the work he has commenced in so many lines.

With one practice which characterized Dr. Mitchell I am inclined to think few are familiar, because his refinement and



thoroughly patrician instincts would naturally lead him to conceal it. I refer to the practice of rendering financial assistance to younger men in their struggles for success in early professional life. This he would do either by direct loan of money, unsolicited though it might be, or by sums advanced to assist in research and experiment or in compensation for literary work or professional assistance. He was indeed one who did not let his left hand know what his right did. The following lines published in a recent issue of one of our daily papers, entitled "An Appreciation," so accurately reflect the truth that I take the liberty of quoting them in conclusion:

"Whoso are great all hail him great,  
And honor him as best they may,  
Each in his own appointed way.  
But they who judge of height from height  
Can never have so sheer delight,  
So true a measure of his worth,  
As those of lesser birth;  
Who, looking upward, feel his smile,  
And knowing, too, the while  
How far he has to stoop  
To be so passing kind."



TRIBUTE TO S. WEIR MITCHELL

BY DR. G. E. DE SCHWEINITZ

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE FROM 1911 TO 1913



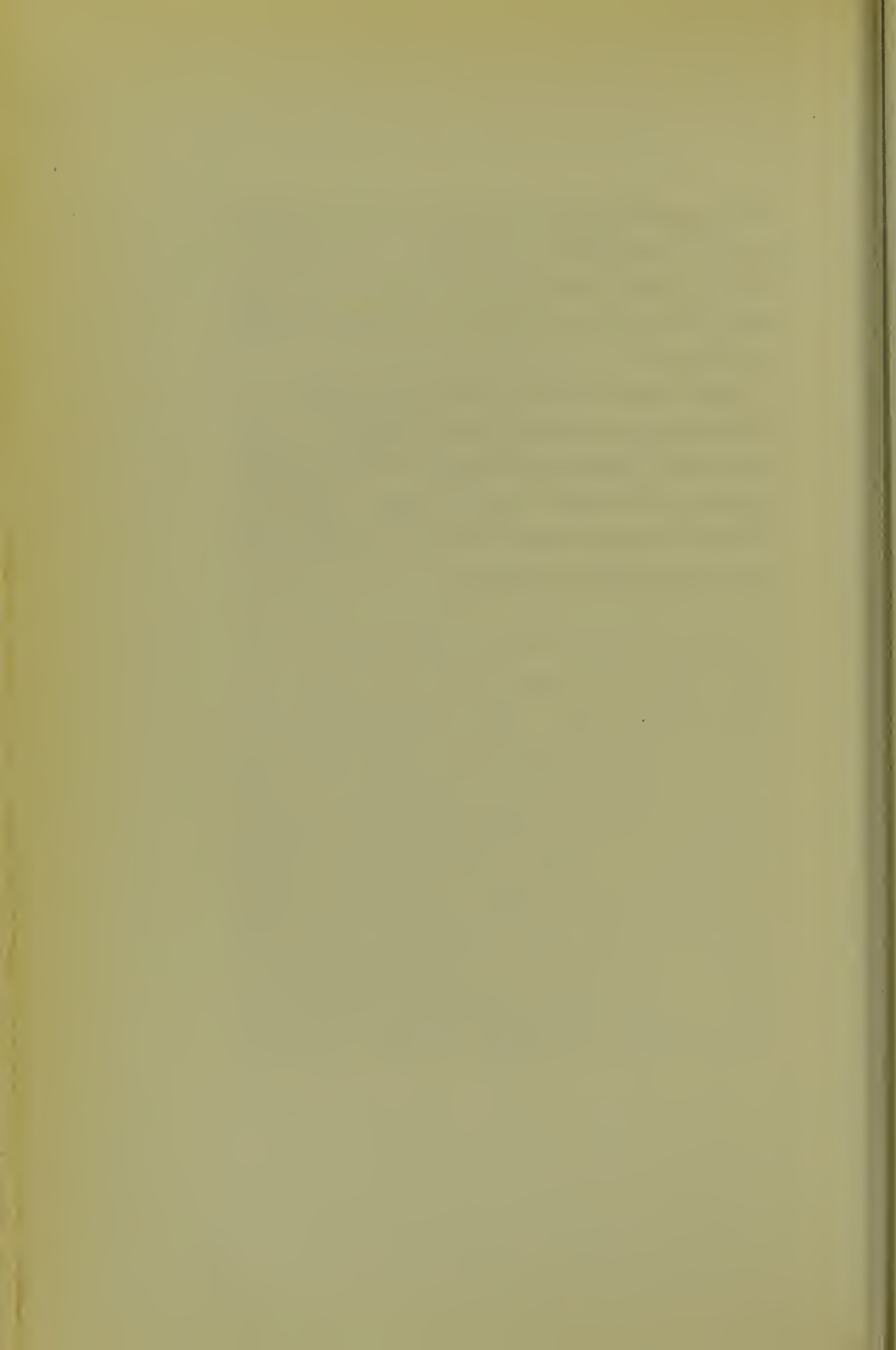
AT one time or another each member of this collegiate body must have thought of the great emptiness Dr. Mitchell would leave when he went away from us. Now we are looking into it. This is the present vision of our eyes, and there is no tone deep enough for regret, no word fine enough to beguile us from the grief of our loss. And yet, keen though our sorrow is, we hold fast to, and make record of, a solemn pride which is our sustaining right in that with honors thick upon him, with the result of his achievements named and famed throughout the world, this our beloved College of Physicians was ever the favorite object of his heart. Of the love with which he cherished it, of the thought he gave to it, of the labor he bestowed upon it, we know, and we, the Fellows of the College, are the beneficiaries of the full-measured effort he brought to it. The last words he spoke in this hall were a plea for still further widening our ever-increasing sphere of usefulness, and ours must be the sacred privilege to do those things which he would have done had



he been spared longer to live and work with us. On some other occasion full record will be made of Dr. Mitchell's worth and work: how he lighted the lamp of his genius and became the salvor of the nervous wreck; how he mended the wear and tear of the over-worked human machine; how he elaborated a method of treatment world-wide in its beneficial results; how he studied and solved the problems of experimental science; how he sweetened the lives of those once bitter with the sorrow of mental and of physical ills; how his songs have flowed through many a heart; how his books have brightened the hours of those who read. But let that biographer tell also of the warmth of his friendship, of the stimulus of his example, of the wealth of his suggestions, of the never-failing kindness of his active interest. Let him tell what he did for the young men of our profession; how the wisdom of his advice smoothed away the ignorance of inexperience; how he steadied feet stumbling along the path of early endeavor; how he started men, young men,

and guided them on the sure road which leads to honorable usefulness; and how he did all these things with a fine generosity that it is a joy to remember and a privilege to record.

Mr. President, the College has lost its most loved and distinguished Fellow; it can never lose the inspiration of his splendid presence nor the favor of his example. These are, and must always remain, our most treasured possessions.



TRIBUTE TO S. WEIR MITCHELL

BY DR. FREDERICK P. HENRY

HONORARY LIBRARIAN OF THE COLLEGE





I HAVE been requested by the President to prepare a minute expressive of the deep feeling of bereavement which is shared by every Fellow of the College, and respectfully submit the following:

We are met to honor the memory of the most remarkable man in the medical history of this country. We have had many illustrious men in our profession, and the race is by no means extinct; but I have no fear that my statement will be challenged nor that it would be if I included in it the medical profession of the world.

I will not compare Weir Mitchell with other great men, for it is not by comparison that we form our estimate of an individual. I will simply mention a few facts in his remarkable career with some of which all present are probably familiar, but with all of which few, if any, are.

Although never occupying a chair in any medical school, Dr. Mitchell was, through his writings and his active participation in the proceedings of medical societies, the teacher

of those who taught. He was a pioneer in the sciences of experimental physiology and neurology. I was familiar with his name as an authority in medicine when I was a medical student, and I was graduated in 1868. His life was a complete refutation of the fallacy that there is any time-limit to a man's capacity for original work. In his eighty-fifth year he added another to his long list of successful novels, successful in the highest sense of the word, for they have secured a permanent place in English literature.

In his numerous and varied activities he represented the spirit of the age, but he would have represented the spirit of any age in which he might have lived. In the days which we, in our self-sufficiency, regard as primitive, days when poetry and philosophy and sculpture and architecture attained a degree of perfection that has never been surpassed or even equalled, Weir Mitchell might have had a place in the Pantheon, for the qualities which compelled the admiration and respect of this generation

were the very ones whose possessors were deified by Greece and Rome. By giving a legitimate scope to our imagination we can think of him as a disciple of Æsculapius, who rivalled his master and was accorded equal honor with him, and in that imaginary event we can fancy the noble statue of Æsculapius which adorns our hall replaced by the equally noble figure of Weir Mitchell. It is far better as it is, far better for us who have felt the direct influence of his quickening spirit, and, awakening from our dream, we may thank God that he lived in our day and generation, and that his works are now among our incunabula.

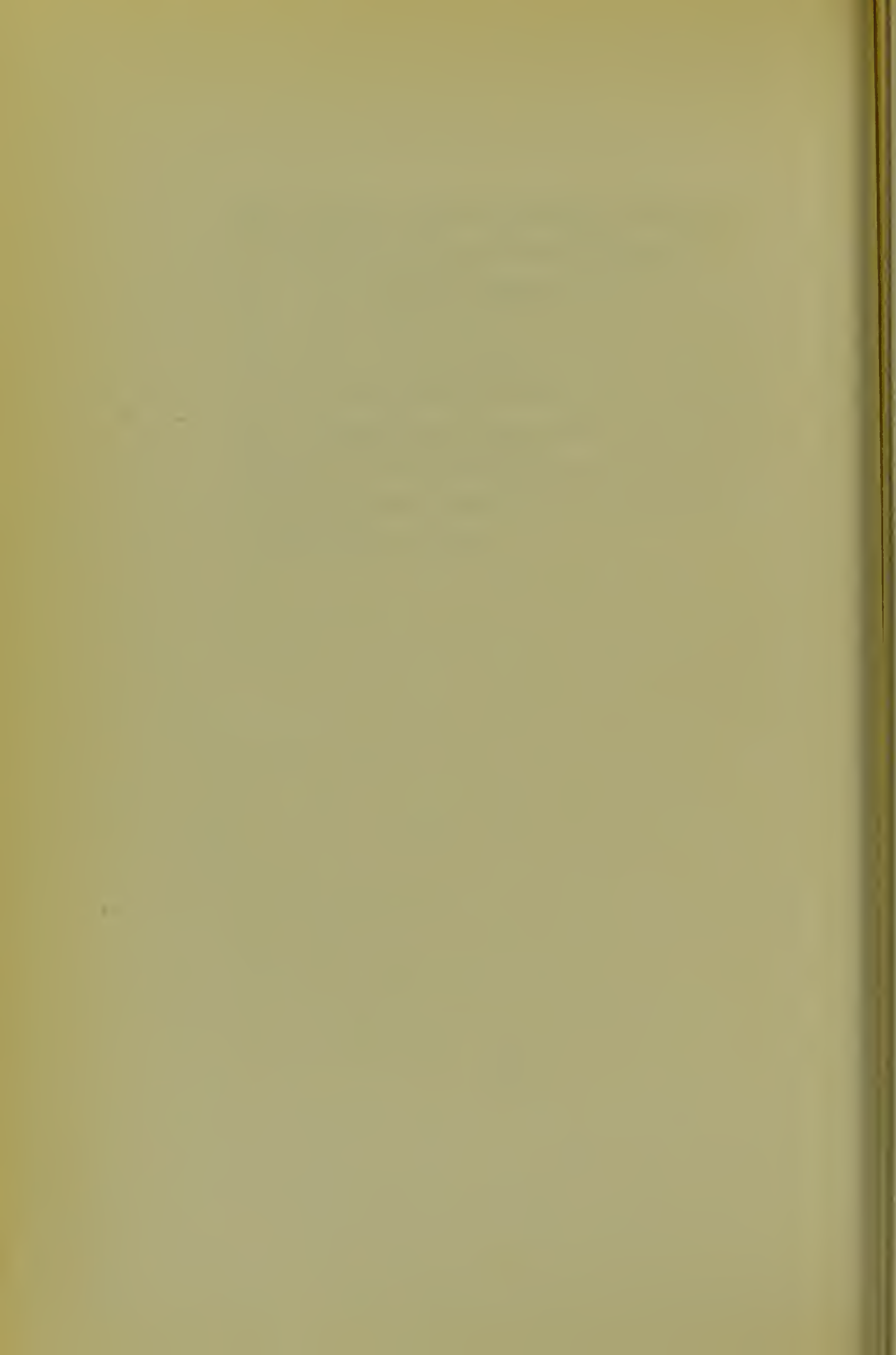
I am oppressed by the thought that the noble countenance with which we were all so familiar is now but a memory; that I shall no more sit with him at the meetings of the Library Committee, where we delighted to do him honor, where we strove to anticipate his wishes, and where his suggestions were our commands.

Although his face is but a memory and his

voice no longer heard, his spirit is still with us, and will remain so long as we maintain the traditions he revered and which have as their basis the virtues of honesty, justice, and truth. These formed the substratum of his own character, and the graces of gentleness, sympathy, and tact, which were so conspicuous in its superstructure, derived their convincing force from the solid foundation on which they rested.

MINUTE PASSED BY THE BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF PENNSYLVANIA





WHEREAS, We, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, have heard of the recent death of our distinguished associate, Silas Weir Mitchell, M.D., LL.D., with profound regret, and prompted by feelings of sincere sympathy with the living and of high regard for the lamented dead, desire to make record of our sentiments; be it therefore

*Resolved*, That the sad intelligence of the death of Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, a death which seems sudden and unexpected despite the fulness of years to which he had attained, has come as a shock to the University, well calculated to awaken in us all emotions of unaffected sorrow and lasting regret.

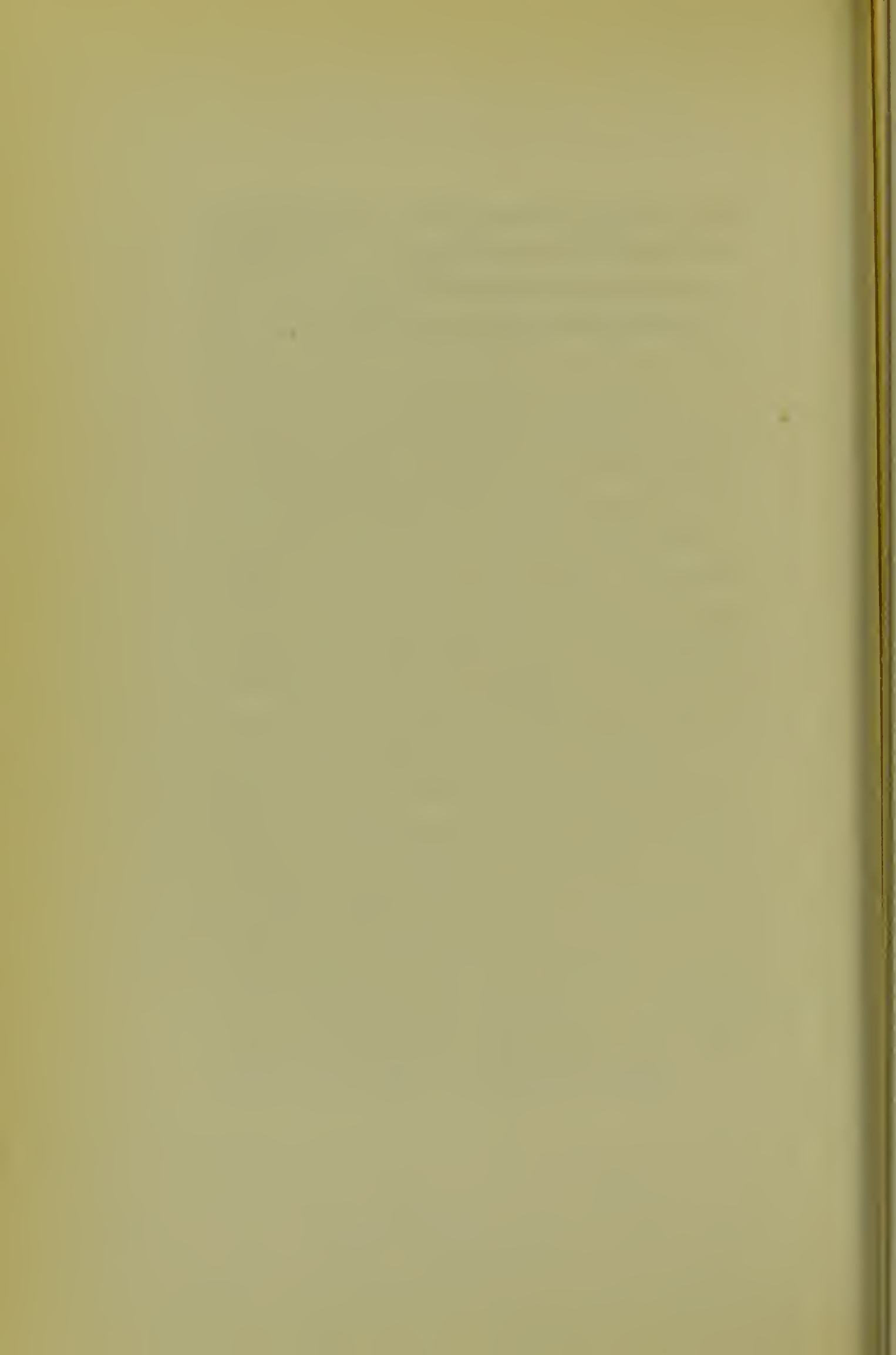
*Resolved*, That the University feels justly proud of the brilliant and distinguished career of a son whose original and valuable researches in physiology and experimental medicine, as well as the fruitful cultivation of other fields of science, enlarged the sum of human knowledge, while his successful work as a practitioner of rare skill and deep insight diminished the sum of human suffering, professional achievements which, no less than

his remarkable power and eminence in the realms of the imagination which find expression in literature, made the name of Weir Mitchell widely known and highly esteemed both at home and abroad and laid a firm foundation for a fame which will endure.

*Resolved*, That we deeply deplore the loss of Weir Mitchell as a man, as a public-spirited citizen, and especially as a Trustee of the University, and as a member of the class of 1848, and shall long remember the energy and the far-sighted, keen interest, the zeal, tempered by experience, and the persuasive cordiality which he brought to her service during the long term of thirty-five years as a member of this board, an example to be emulated by us who remain and an inspiration to the Trustees that shall come after us.

*Resolved*, That these resolutions be spread on the records of the board and communicated to the faculties of the University; and that a copy be sent to the surviving members of the family of Dr. Mitchell as a respectful offering of the sincere sympathy and condolence of the Trustees of the University.

A MINUTE OF APPRECIATION AND ESTEEM  
ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA



WE, of the Council of the School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania, profoundly affected by the death of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, on January 4, 1914, desire to make record of our deep sorrow and to bear witness to our personal loss, and, in a larger sense, to the loss which our School of Medicine has sustained.

For thirty-five years a trustee of our University, he gave to all her departments full measure of the richness of his influence, of his effort, and of his stimulus, but to none of them more liberally and more wisely than to this our Department of Medicine.

Of his distinguished accomplishments in experimental science and their practical application the world possesses an admiring knowledge, and from them has reaped an ample benefit. His work in comparative and human anatomy and physiology; his researches in toxicology; his study of the remote effects of injured nerves, the outcome of observations while loyally serving his country during the Civil War; his researches



on the venoms of poisonous serpents; his investigation of the cause of functional nervous diseases and his introduction of rest-cure in the treatment of these disorders, which revolutionized their management, is world-famed in its importance; his recognition of the significance of distant symptoms in their interpretation of disturbed function in individual organs; his establishment of new clinical types of disease and his thorough study of symptoms and their combinations; his lessons in nervous disease, his amazing skill as a healer of the mentally sick, and his never-flagging, systematic, and organized research in all that pertains to the science and art of medicine, constitute a record of achievement to which few men attain.

“He was filled with the spirit of scholarship, and represented its finest traditions,” and firm as was his place in the world’s best work in science, the large and distinguished output of his literary talent in prose and poetry ever enhanced his commanding posi-

tion, never dimming his medical effort, but emphasized its happy combination with his artistic temperament.

We of the School of Medicine must ever bear in loving remembrance his high aims, his interest in humanity, his never-failing generosity, his stimulating suggestiveness, and his eagerness to help, encourage, and support him who would enter the field of original and clinical research.

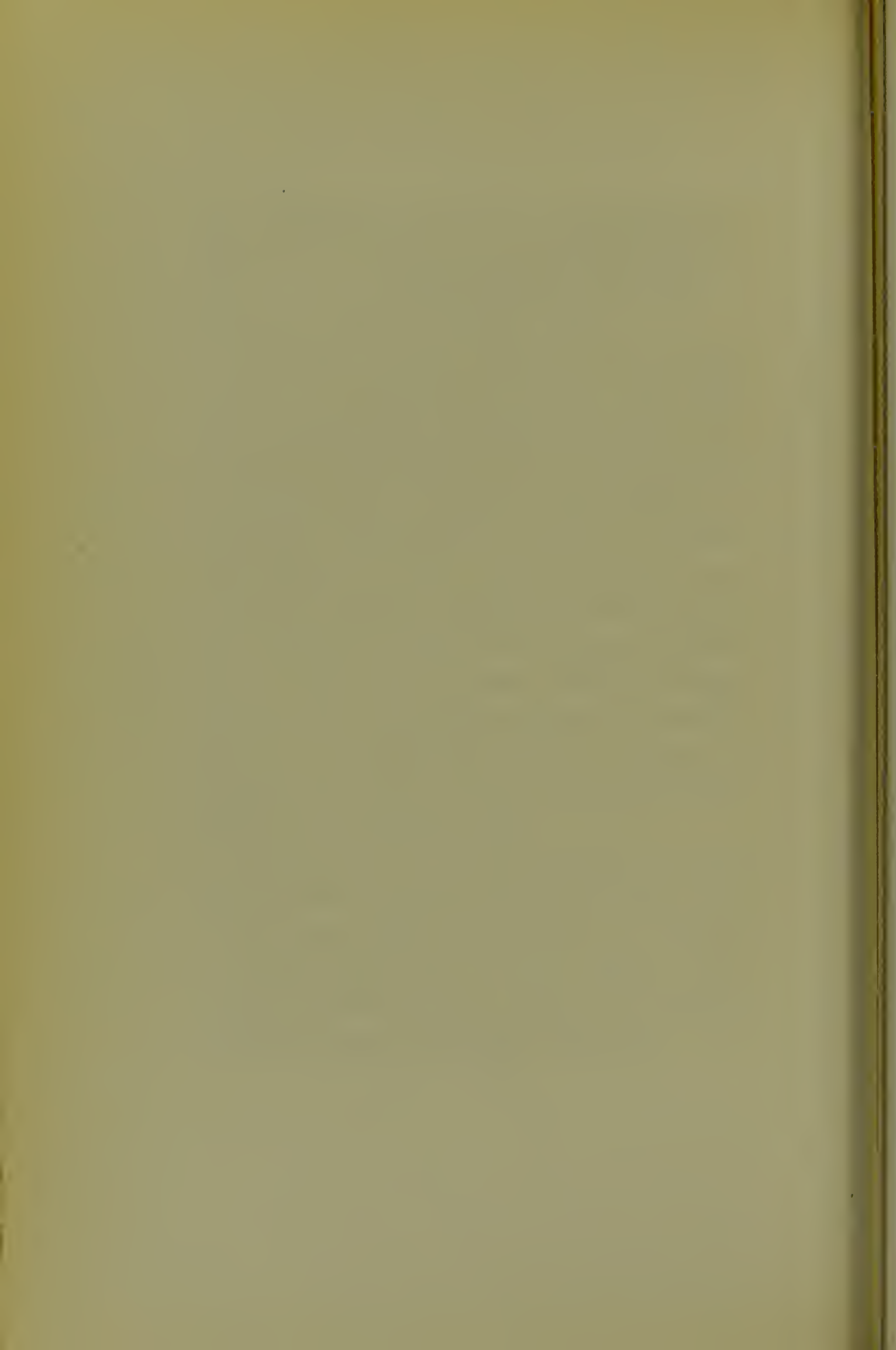
The Departments of Physiology, Neurology, and Pathology are in a special sense the beneficiaries of his unflagging efforts. Foremost among those who recognized the value to the medical student of a preparatory course in biology, he was earnest in energizing the activities of our School of Biology. Research work not only received his endorsement and approval, but to it he gave direct and personal attention, taking part with the professor of physiology in some of the most important investigations which have been carried on in the University laboratories. Through his influence large grants

were obtained for research work by members of the University faculties, resulting in discoveries which justly have taken a foremost rank in scientific effort.

Not only was Dr. Mitchell the inspiring spirit in all forms of medical laboratory work, but he also maintained an unceasing interest in the improvement and expansion of clinical work, especially in the domain of neurology and of internal medicine. Indeed, so important and so various were the directions in which he extended his influence and his abilities in all these respects, that the story cannot be recorded without recalling almost every important advance in the history and achievements of the School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania during the last forty years.

A moral force in social and civic affairs, in the front rank of literary excellence, promoter and patron of scientific and medical research, the name of Dr. Mitchell takes enduring place in the history of American medicine and of American literature.

MINUTE PASSED BY THE DIRECTORS  
OF THE LIBRARY COMPANY  
OF PHILADELPHIA



ON the fifteenth of the coming February, Dr. S. Weir Mitchell would have completed his eighty-fifth year. Early in the morning of Sunday, January 4, after a quiet illness of less than seven days, he died. He had been a director of the Library Company of Philadelphia since April, 1875. He was born and educated in Philadelphia, and graduated at the Jefferson Medical College in 1850.

It is not here, in our intimate memories and affection, that we either need or wish to dwell upon him as a great physician, or a distinguished man of letters, or to narrate the steps of his long, illustrious life. That will be done in many places, both within and outside of his own country. Let us remind ourselves merely of this: that he published his first medical paper in 1852, at the age of twenty-three, and that threescore years later he wrote his last novel, *Westways*, which has rivalled in popularity and far surpassed in excellence the tales of authors young enough to be his sons and grandsons. All of us know the activity that crowded that span of sixty



years; all of us are aware of its wide, unceasing beneficence; he served his fellow-men in countless ways, and his unknown deeds of kindness were as constant as those which brought him public renown and gratitude. He would have died a rich man but for the act of repairing with his private fortune his share of the loss to stockholders and depositors occasioned by the failure of a trust company of which he was a director. This voluntary act set an example of honor and integrity in itself alone enough to make him a memorable citizen.

It is as a friend we think of him here, loyal, wise, unforgetting; a warm heart, a generous hand. It is hard to imagine the streets of our town without his familiar face.

MINUTE PASSED BY THE BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES OF THE JEFFERSON  
MEDICAL COLLEGE OF  
PHILADELPHIA



THE Trustees of the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia desire to place upon their records an expression of their sense of the great loss sustained by the medical profession, by literature, and by the community at large in the death of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell.

It was his good fortune—rarely enjoyed by any man—to win lasting fame in several widely different directions. As a practising physician and the author of many noted works on medical subjects, he was a leader in his profession; and was recognized, here and abroad, as one of its commanding figures. In the domain of literature he won great distinction as a poet and novelist; and his wonderful activity in this field, which commenced before he had reached middle life and lasted until the close of his days, earned for him a reputation in the world of letters vastly more widespread than that which was purely professional.

His personal character was as admirable as it was attractive, and his civic duties

were discharged with zeal and with fidelity to the highest standards of morals and good government.

The Jefferson Medical College has, during its long career, sent out to the ranks of the profession many men who became a great honor to their alma mater. In the list of these alumni, Dr. Mitchell's name may, without discredit to any other, be placed at the head; where, for all time, it will stand.

*Clarum et venerabile nomen.*

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA INVITING  
OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO JOIN WITH  
THE COLLEGE IN A MEMORIAL  
MEETING





THE College of Physicians of Philadelphia, at its meeting on February 4, 1914, adopted the following resolution:

RESOLVED, That a committee be appointed to arrange for a memorial meeting to DR. S. WEIR MITCHELL, and to invite such other organizations to join with the College in such meeting as they may deem wise.

In accordance with this resolution, the President appointed Dr. George E. de Schweinitz, Dr. W. W. Keen, and Dr. William J. Taylor a committee to arrange for this memorial meeting.

At a meeting held for this purpose on February 12, 1914, these gentlemen, with Mr. C. C. Harrison and Dr. Robert G. LeConte, who represented the University of Pennsylvania; Mr. John Cadwalader and Mr. Joseph G. Rosengarten, who represented the American Philosophical Society; Mr. George Harrison Fisher and Mr. Owen Wister, who represented the Library Company of Philadelphia; Dr. Charles B. Penrose and Dr. F. X. Dercum, who represented the Academy

of Natural Sciences; and Mr. William Potter, the President of the Board of Trustees, and Dr. Dercum, who represented the Jefferson Medical College, arranged for a joint meeting of these various organizations, and full power was given to Dr. George E. de Schweinitz, Dr. W. W. Keen, and Dr. William J. Taylor, who represented the College, to make all arrangements.

A JOINT MEETING  
OF  
THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA  
THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  
THE LIBRARY COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA  
THE JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE  
AND  
THE ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES  
WAS HELD  
IN MEMORY OF  
S. WEIR MITCHELL, M.D., LL.D., F.R.S.

ON  
TUESDAY EVENING, MARCH THIRTY-FIRST  
NINETEEN-FOURTEEN  
IN THE HALL OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS  
TWENTY-SECOND STREET ABOVE CHESTNUT STREET

DR. JAMES C. WILSON  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS  
PRESIDED

AND ADDRESSES WERE DELIVERED BY

MR. TALCOTT WILLIAMS	DR. WILLIAM H. WELCH
OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY	OF JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

AND

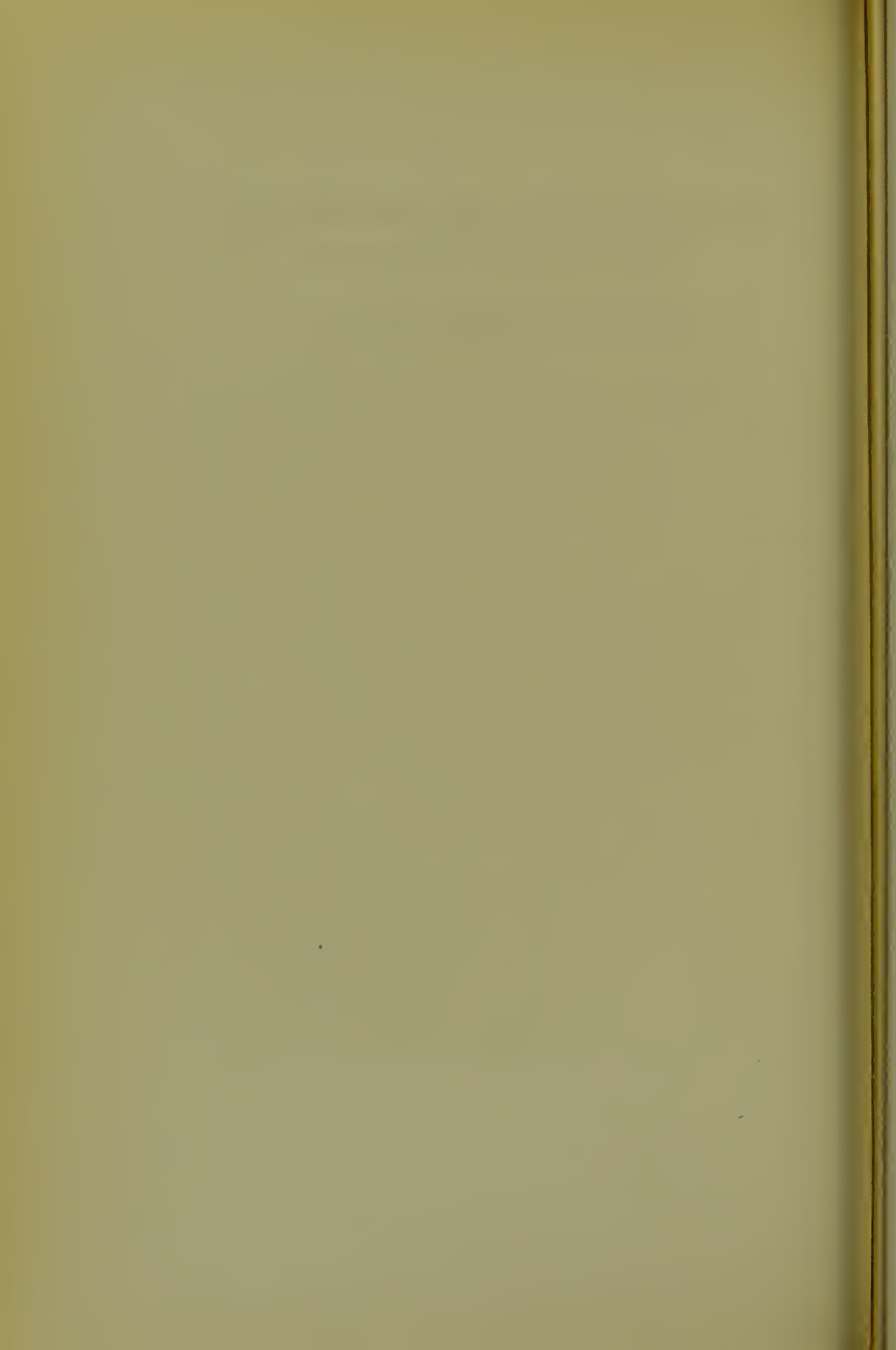
MR. OWEN WISTER  
OF PHILADELPHIA



INTRODUCTION BY THE PRESIDENT OF  
THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS

DR. JAMES CORNELIUS WILSON





LITTLE more than four years have elapsed since this building was completed and this hall inscribed with the name of one whom every Fellow of the College delighted to honor. On two occasions in the past it has been the scene of meetings to commemorate with solemnity the life and services of great citizens who have ceased from their labors. Tonight, for the third time in that short period, it witnesses a united tribute of love and appreciation; on this occasion to one who was in the highest sense a great citizen and a great physician.

Lea, Furness, Mitchell! Friends and contemporaries! Joyous toilers in the rich fields of usefulness to their fellow-men. Unconscious of the passing of the years, since with every decade came new skill in doing the beloved work and a renewed sense of power and success. Young in old age, until in a brief day of suffering, youth became immortality.

It is well that we are here tonight to do Mitchell the homage of our grateful remembrance. This assemblage represents the things

that were dear to him—science, the arts, letters, good citizenship, his own beloved profession. In it are those with whom he loved to be joined in rendering service—educators, librarians, public men, journalists, clergymen, and his associates in the great institutions which have come together to render this tribute to his memory. There are others, also, who joyously rise up to call him blessed, two groups of them: those who were sick but by his skill have been made well, and those who by his teaching have learned the art to cure.

It is meet that we should be assembled in this place in honoring his memory. The College of Physicians was always in his thoughts. From the time when he became a Fellow in 1856 until his death he was constantly active in its affairs. His last brief address concerned the interests of the College, and was spoken to a group of friends in this hall. In every movement of its wonderful progress and development he was an earnest, wise, and enthusiastic leader. He served as its president from 1886 till 1889 and again from

1892 till 1895. His contributions to its scientific business were many, and always of the highest order. They were usually brief, but invariably suggested much more than was said. He gave us of his best. His interest in the books never flagged. His regular attendance at the meetings of the library committee was an inspiration. His gifts of rare and curious volumes were without stint, and he inspired others to give. Bibliophile of a very high order, he made those who were near to him also dear lovers of books, just as he aroused in younger men the love of science and the spirit of scientific research.

In 1878 he placed in the keeping of the Secretary of this College a sealed envelope upon which was written over his signature the words, "Not to be opened until my death." On the sad day of his funeral it was found to contain this statement: "I give to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia the copy of the original portrait of Harvey and that of John Hunter, the gift to become effective upon my death."

If you wish to know what he thought of this College, read his occasional addresses as they appear in the volumes of the *Transactions*, especially those delivered at the ceremonies of the dedication of this building. If you wish to know what he has done for it, behold the building itself, for the success of the movement which brought it into existence is largely due to the broad-mindedness, the indomitable will, and the knowledge of men which were prominent traits in the character of Silas Weir Mitchell.

I have spoken of him thus briefly as citizen, friend, physician, as though he was not only of us, but ours. But he is not ours alone; he belongs to the illustrious succession to whom the world everywhere accords the unquestioned title of great.

The orators of the evening will speak in turn to you of Dr. Mitchell's abundant and splendid life, of his distinguished scientific work, and of his rare literary gifts.

THE PRESIDENT: The first address is that of  
MR. TALCOTT WILLIAMS, of Columbia University,  
close and familiar friend of many years.





S. WEIR MITCHELL

BY TALCOTT WILLIAMS



THE ripple of welcome which you have given me at this hour of sorrow, in the place where I was once at home and am now but a stranger, moves me; but this is not a moment when you or I are thinking of ourselves. I look about me and see in ranked ranges in this hall, which carries his name, the faces of those who, like myself, through long years lived in that great life, greatly lived. I am here, as are the many here who knew him well, in this last hour in which, with him as our centre, we meet together to remember and to recall the very heart of the one friendship of life which has dominated and inspired us all.

Each of us can but review and renew a record, unfading and unfailing, whose every thought brings with it, not grief alone, but a note of high triumph, that such a man should have lived, still more that his life should have been shared by us, and, most of all, that it shall remain a perpetual inheritance of us all, of this city, of this College, and of its radiating influence and instruction through years

to come, touching many to their healing, themselves unconscious of his share in that great and beneficent tide of the calling to which he belonged. Its lofty traditions he never forgot; in its honor he gloried; and to it he added through all his working years.

Six corporate bodies gather here to do honor to his name. Four of them—the University of Pennsylvania, the American Philosophical Society, this College, and the Philadelphia Library—were organized before the Revolution, when no one thought of the independence of the United States. Two others—the Academy of Natural Sciences and the Jefferson Medical College—were organized by those who knew the men of the Revolution. It is in this background of Revolutionary memories that we should set this life. When he was born the administration of Washington was no farther away than is for us today the administration of Arthur. In his boyhood days the end of the Revolution was as close to his life as is to us the life of Lincoln. He passed his early days

knowing those who had done the work of the Revolution. Bishop Meade, the son of an aide of Washington, sat often at his father's table. He was, himself, the intimate friend of Bache, the grandson of Franklin. He was born and lived in the colonial quarter of the city, in that day but little changed. In the day of Washington the "Red City" ran to Eighth Street. The houses of that day were on the streets he early knew. The men, of sixty or so, whom he knew in his boyhood, in their boyhood had seen Howe and his troops in the streets of Philadelphia. In his boyhood days houses extended only to Broad Street, and he remembered well that "there was good skating at Broad and Walnut Streets," and that "beyond Sixteenth Street no house broke the long road to the Schuylkill." In a century and a half the built city had developed to less than half the narrow limits which Penn and Holmes had marked for it.

In this little town, so small, so slow in its growth, were still the colonial characters of whom, as James Russell Lowell once at his



table said of those of a like stamp, lineage, and training in Boston, that they seemed to him the most flavored with personal quality of all the men and women that he had met in a wide survey through his lifetime, which had known the best of both worlds, the old and the new. The poet of the smooth, sliding Charles added that Philadelphia shared and represented these colonial characters, original without being provincial, who had never either looked up or down, but saw life level-eyed. Such men and women Dr. Mitchell met. His own days were enriched by their ideal of life. He was, for us all, the last vivid link and reminder of those days, simple but strong, when our land emerged to national consciousness and developed the complex period we know.

He came of sturdy Scotch stock, which had tarried for a season in Virginia. His grandfather was the Mitchell who gave to Robert Burns the post by which he lived. His mother came from a manufacturing family of wide relation in central England, and a

brother of hers proposed to adopt the young son whom he loved. Death frustrated this purpose. Had London been more kindly to Franklin he would have been lost to us. By chances as narrow as these do cities miss the greatness which great men give when they walk their streets. Had England been his home, Dr. Mitchell was justified in feeling that the success of the merchant and man of affairs would have been his. As Dr. Samuel Johnson said, a man with a strong pair of legs can walk east as easily as west.

With a candor all his own, Dr. Mitchell in the autobiography which he has left has described his early days. He came of a religious family, in a religious day, when the Church was present in all the affairs of life; and I venture—that the boy still young may be before us—to read a single passage from this autobiography, which to you, as with me when I read it, will suddenly bring before us the vision in early boyhood of one whom we have known only in his maturer years: “When we stayed at Aunt —— we had to

go to church twice on Sunday and say a text daily, and the Presbyterian services were of portentous length. I found that I could smuggle in with me a small copy of *Midshipman Easy*, and in a dark corner of the pew comfort myself therewith. A son of my aunt used to stay with us there, and as I disliked him, we not infrequently had combats, and such results as were visible had to be laid to diverse causes."

He felt, himself, that in his early studies he was ill-taught. He developed slowly. His lessons were a wearisome task. To the last he did not so much learn as absorb, finding his harvest in every field along the open road of his life. Bit by bit, in his early years, he pieced together the beginning of the marvelous knowledge which clothed him at the last with a panoply of learning. Even in college he regretted that he obtained less than the opportunity offered, for it is true, as we all know, that while studies are "pursued" in college, they are not always overtaken. There is much in college, however, besides

study and books—there are men. There began for him the friendship for years of Henry Wharton. There he first felt the touch of science from Frazier. Through life there was to live with him the passion for literature which he caught from Reed. From the very motto of the University which he attended he learned, as all learn, that knowledge and learning and thoughts and works of men are vague without the foundation of morals. There began in those days, when religion was all about, and the habit of weekly attendance was universal, his habit which continued all his days. Through all his years on Easter Sunday he sought Christ Church, and there but a year ago, as in all previous years, he sat through the service which years had made his own. The winds of criticism and the doubts of the day passed him by; he remained through all his life of that simple and sincere faith which he had early known and seen, which he cherished to the end, of which he spoke as infrequently as all men speak of that which is the depth and founda-



tion of their lives. But through all the sorrows that came—and many came to him—there were moments when he must have felt, as the prophet did: “Look upon my sorrow and see if the sorrow of any of the sons of men has been like unto my sorrow;” he found there the support to which he unhesitatingly turned. Tonight’s joint record of his life would be incomplete without this testimony from one who knew him long and loved him well. In years when all of us shall feel moving beneath our feet, weary with the long journey, the shifting sands which men seek to build upon in our days, we shall gather from him inspiration, strong conviction, and the certain footing of the upward path whose end is light.

The true education of his life came from the societies which here are gathered together in his honor and memory. In his autobiography he has recorded that his education began and almost ended in the books of the Philadelphia Library. There he was taken by his father after his mother had locked up

the solitary copy of the *Arabian Nights* which he found and which she discovered. Neither he nor his brothers were able to learn a line of their lessons while he stood ready to read the tales of Scherezade.

In the shelves of the Philadelphia Library, and in the folio volumes which he carried to his house when he was so small that he could but spread them upon the floor and lie at full length, he received through young years the training of a lifetime. As I read the titles which he recorded of books he read before he was ten, I suddenly understood how his boyhood was one which was perpetually enlarging. Once in lecturing he gaily told the girls of Radcliffe that the reason why he wrote novels was because having read all there were to be had he desired more. This was almost literally true, of his life so thronged with travail, travel, and libraries. He found time for one or two volumes a week of fiction, and in some amazing fashion added to his life twenty to thirty volumes a year—blendings of all sorts and orders, on all subjects,



and no current verse of weight did he miss. English was his reading. Other tongues he used but enjoyed not.

From the Academy of Natural Sciences he received the first impulse toward the study of Nature. It was as a naturalist and not as a physician that he was elected a member of this early American centre of research, record, and discovery.

At Jefferson College he records that he first learned concentration of mind, that there he gained the capacity both to learn and to impart knowledge. Was there ever, for any of us, such another teacher as he, so alluring, so electrifying, so capable of inducing thought, stimulating work, and piloting to discovery?

It was his father's influence which carried him through the 'teens of his early youth and enabled him to break the bar of physical weakness and to lay the strength for the future in four years spent with boat and rod and gun upon the rivers that surround this city. It was from his father's inspiration that he

slowly built the foundation of knowledge which was necessary for his medical training, and it was from his father that there came to him that sense of the long succession of life for the physician, in which generations succeed generation, in which men of this lofty calling housed here live wheresoever they move in the house of their fathers, of their land and of their vocation, and find in the corporate life of some college like this the sense alike of the inheritance and the perpetuity of the professional life to which they belong. More than half a century has passed since his father departed, and since it is alike a record of his father and an unconscious record of himself, I read what in his autobiography he says of Dr. Mitchell: "My father was the best physician I ever knew. He never failed in his resources; there was always something in reserve. The social qualities of the man, and a certain buoyancy that helped men made admirable additions to his qualities of mind; and the charm of a modulated voice and of singular

beauty were not wanting. It would not have been easy to find a better example of all the qualities that win success in my profession."

There were many chances open to him, and the father of whom he wrote once told him, as he records in his autobiography, that his son had no qualifications that made the physician. Judgments like these, as Dr. Weir Mitchell records, are those which are constantly made by those who forget the slow, orderly processes by which some lives unfold, and pass step by step from the experiences of youth to maturity by changes which are wholly within and are little due to influences without. Rejecting every other offer, passing by the tempting opening which lay before him in a day when the disparity of life and opportunity between the old world and the new was great, as it is not today, he sought the calling of his father, and he sought it, undoubtedly, because his father had placed it before him; not in precept, but in example; not in injunction, but in life; and he entered upon the practice of his profession with three

periods before him. For a score of years he was to struggle with an arduous family practice in a town still small. For another score of years he was to be known to all the world as a man who had added to the resources of medicine, and had made a great field so completely his own that he turned the course of medicine with its boundaries as the foot of the husbandman turns the rivers of water; and for twenty years more he was to be a man known in our world's large affairs, to be a figure in its important phases. In many fields he had sown seed and from each had reaped some harvest which shall remain.

There is a Hindu saying that a man should be for twenty years a soldier, for twenty a statesman, and that for twenty years he should be a sage, sought for his wisdom. And as we look upon that life we realize that the Hindu was right. For twenty years the man we love fought—for a practice and a livelihood; for twenty years his opinion guided a great calling and led in civil life and the larger issues

of his day, and for twenty years he sat as a man whom all men sought and found there the wisdom which made clear to them why the Greek had found in Apollo—the god of wisdom and the god of healing.

Of those who are here, save a number so small they might all be seated behind me in the spare seats of this platform, none knew him in those days of a family practice. Those who knew his life of abounding success, of the abounding endowment of a learning that encompassed all and flowed in many channels—medicine, science, education, philosophy—forget those arduous years in which, year by year, he struggled for the meager dole of the practitioner. It is recorded in his autobiography that in the ten years after he began the practice of medicine his receipts in the year were only a thousand dollars, and in that year he had suddenly thrown upon him the responsibility of caring for his father's family and was approaching his own marriage. There were days, he records, in which, besides his office hours, he paid half a



hundred visits, and there was no field for the family practitioner in the small town from which he stood apart. He shared in labors which today are almost exclusively the work of the specialist, and through those years he continued the writing, the discovery, the study which was to mark all his days. I know of nothing, as the records of this meeting are printed in one medical paper and another, likely to bear more fruit and encourage more those who are in the beginning of their work, than a knowledge of the obstacles which he faced and overcame.

The Civil War came and opened to him, as it opened to many, the door of opportunity; and it also took lives dear to him. The early hope of his life was closed in death. He passed through these arduous years to find, as men often do, that the patient toil which he had given to the case of one soldier and another smitten by nervous maladies had spread his name abroad. We turn to the record of his autobiography for this and learn that the knowledge of his work and skill had gone to hamlets



and towns where he could never have gone— and a wide public came to know that the practitioner's life had fruited in assuaging affections dependent upon the nerves. There flowed in upon him, as a result of the scientific, intelligent use of large opportunity, such a practice as changed his life, and the income which had been so small in these days of struggle rose to figures which even in this day would be large, and there began for him that wider life and larger usefulness which we all know.

The best known use he made of this new freedom was in medical research and discovery, but tonight I am not sure but that the best use which he made of it was to divide his work year, and to give half of it to what he loved to call the playground of the mind. Past four-score years, his natural skill was unabated and his mind still full of suggestion, because he was wise enough to part, as he once told me, with half his professional income that he might enjoy the kingdom of the mind. And this greater life—

the kingdom of the mind—was worth the surrendering for half a year of the most jealous of callings and the most exacting of occupations. He passed on through all the years blossoming in discovery, always in the same mental attitude.

The character of his discovery I leave to him who succeeds me, able both to record and to judge; and later one more skilled but not more affectionate or admiring will speak to us of Dr. Mitchell's work in letters as can only a craftsman versed and known in our literature.

This rich and manifold career, child and pattern of the spacious Renaissance rather than of our own specialized days, added to medicine, letters, affairs, and the fine art of friendship, the capacity for organization which has always marked and mastered the loftier labors of this city. Franklin left behind him a parterre of institutions. Three of the six which send their delegations here tonight are of his planting, and these are a scant third of the full list of those still

in existence which that great journalist began.

A century ago Philadelphia was the centre of the early organization of science in this country, and the first beginning of special organized charity was here. Here a Shakespeare society was first organized, with which Dr. Mitchell was long associated. He was conspicuous in organizing and directing the first of the great Sanitary fairs during the Civil War. Of his share in organizing the observation of the medical experience of that struggle another speaks, and of his part in hospital organization. The scientific contact of the University of Pennsylvania with medical problems he did much to organize, beginning what was then new in our higher education. His early election to the National Academy of Science brought him in close relation to the widening field of biological research, and here again there came call for his capacity for organizing and directing, suggesting and illuminating the experiments, investigations, and conclusions of others. To

the very close of his life he kept his marvelous power of original suggestion and the vision for coming problems. The man who sixty years ago was busy at the opening of his professional life with the new problems in the nervous system of man, in the month before he died was aglow with experiment over analogous problems in the structure and action of plants.

This long association with the direction and reorganization of research and discovery in science led by natural steps to his service in the Carnegie Institution of Washington. From its first beginning to his death he was on its executive committee, and it was due to his suggestion and to his wide sympathy with the sciences which draw near to the humanities that the Carnegie Institution published the one continuous manuscript in existence of the Arthurian cycle, turned to the archeology of Central Asia, laid the student of Chaucer under a lasting debt, and at many points reorganized the science of learning as well as the learning of science.



For an instant let us remember that his discoveries came by a certain action of his mind: A man brings to his door a box of rattlesnakes for sale—of all wares, least likely to increase wisdom and discovery—and he takes them in, and for two score years there run the series of investigations which would unravel the secret of venom which had appalled primitive man and had remained unknown through all the centuries of civilization. He is on a vacation and with no laboratory—there are some men who are their own laboratories, as was he—no material but a turtle; no tool but his pocket lancet, and he makes the discovery of a chiasm in the turtle, and a new link is forged in the long chain of evolution, as the whole line of medicine moves along the line of its discovery and seeks to place each human being in the environment in which life forces can act and trust to them for the symmetry, growth, and progress alike of the individual and of society.

This mind, which was perpetually seeing

all new relations, had in its methods simple, fundamental principles of daily action—the astonishing order, the amazing precision, the enduring punctuality, the perpetual readiness for every future event days and weeks before its dawn. These are the foundation of a great life. Without them it will remain bent by every storm and buffeted by every hap and mishap which comes and finds it unprepared.

I doubt whether in all our American life there were any for whom social life so blossomed, who so succeeded in raising the level of average converse until it felt the motion of the stars and knew the depth of the universe. Never was there a man who so cherished the art of friendship, so practised it, so knew all its ranging, and who perpetually was ready, if another failed or forgot, to forgive and to act.

At this hour, as we turn in memory to these things, each of us is aware that while we had known what his loss would be, we did not realize that when it came it would leave



us wanderers on a lonely road from which the light had gone.

As I have said, I speak neither of his work in letters nor in scientific discovery of what he found, wrote, and published. Let me speak instead of the men he discovered and published. The world will know the books he has written, but not all will know the men he has helped. There were those to whom he gave the inspiration of life. He gave ideas as the sun, light. He made life seem a larger and a newer thing; he developed it to new inspiration. And I appeal to the memory of all those to whom I speak—here and there I see a familiar face and see it kindled with these memories—if it were not true that life's paramount desire was to be worthy of his advice and to be equal to his anticipation?

THE PRESIDENT: The next tribute will be paid by DR. WILLIAM H. WELCH, of Johns Hopkins University, President of the National Academy of Sciences, long friend and co-worker in the common field of biological research as applied to practical medicine.



S. WEIR MITCHELL  
PHYSICIAN AND MAN OF SCIENCE  
BY DR. WILLIAM H. WELCH



DEEP as is our sense of loss upon the passing of one who has been these many years the foremost figure in American medicine, the dominant feeling on this occasion must be one of exultation over a life of well nigh fourscore years and five, marvellously rich in varied achievement in medicine and letters, beneficent and enduring in influence, and closing with mental vigor and activity unimpaired until that brief last attack of the disease which has been called "the friend of the aged."

It has fallen to me on this occasion to pay tribute to Dr. Mitchell as physician and man of science—the larger and more important side of his life and work. I esteem this opportunity a precious privilege, imperfectly as I shall be able to meet its obligations, for his friendship has been to me, as to many others, a dear possession and a strong influence.

Fortunate and necessary as it is that different speakers should present different aspects of Mitchell's life and work, there



must enter into the picture drawn by each the whole man. No estimate of his medical work can leave out of account the remarkable personality: the traits of mind, of heart, of hand; the genius for friendship; the power to stimulate and inspire others; the setting of time, environment, and opportunity. His literary works have much of circumstance, color, insight, and knowledge which came to him as a physician, and not a little of his medical writing has the charm and power of literature. We, of his profession, should not be willing to relinquish all claim to *Dr. North and His Friends* or to *The Autobiography of a Quack* and the *Case of George Dedlow*, or to some of the poems, as *The Birth and Death of Pain*, *A Doctor's Century*, *The Physician*, and others read on medical occasions. Many of his novels contain descriptions of doctors, patients, epidemics, and historical events which are of distinct medical interest and value.

Weir Mitchell's medical education was such as was customary at the time and in

no way remarkable. Leaving, in 1848, on account of illness the University of Pennsylvania in the senior year of his college course, he received, after two years of study at the Jefferson Medical College, his degree of doctor of medicine in 1850, his graduating thesis being on "The Intestinal Gases." One of the two hundred and eleven members of his class was his friend and co-worker, George R. Morehouse. The members of the faculty at that time were among the leading men of the profession, whose names are still remembered: John K. Mitchell, Dunglison, Houston, Pancoast, Mütter, Charles D. Meigs, and Franklin Bache. Such teachers must have done much to compensate for the defects in the system of medical education then existing in this country, and they help to explain why the results were so much better than the system. Young Mitchell's work in analytical chemistry in the spring and summer for two years and a few months in Brown's drug store must have afforded valuable training in accuracy.

It is indeed startling to find in some rough autobiographical notes left by Weir Mitchell, for extracts from which I am indebted to his son, Dr. John K. Mitchell, Jr., the statement of the father, Dr. John K. Mitchell: "You are wanting in nearly all the qualities that go to make success in medicine. You have brains enough, but no industry." Then follows the comment: "He was correct enough. I developed late."

Another interesting note reads: "Surgery, which was my father's desire for me, was horrible to me. I fainted so often at operations that I began to despair—but by assisting at the surgical clinics I overcame by degrees my horror of blood and pain." Mitchell's experience as a student in this regard is not uncommon, and affords no more indication as to fitness for the profession of physician or surgeon than does the lack of susceptibility to such sensations.

The year of medical study in Paris in 1851–1852, although much interrupted by illness, was a broadening experience. Here he took

courses designed for surgical training, evidently keeping in view his father's desire, but he adds in the autobiographical notes: "I liked better the lessons of Bernard in physiology and of Robin in microscopy." To both of these great teachers and investigators Mitchell has expressed his indebtedness. Of the former he says in his memoir of Dalton: "Bernard strongly influenced the men who sought his courses, and I for one, like Dalton, must gladly acknowledge the educative power of this sturdy genius."

The greatest educative influence, however, upon Weir Mitchell was unquestionably that of his distinguished father, one of the most remarkable and original physicians in the medical history of this country. Of him the son writes in the notes to which I have referred: "My father was the best physician I ever knew. He never failed in resource, and always had something in reserve. Also for carefulness, watchful attention, and swift decisions he has no equal in my memory." There are remarkable similarities between



father and son. Dr. John K. Mitchell, the elder, was a handsome man of social gifts, an acute observer and reasoner, an experimentalist, broadly interested in natural science, endowed with the scientific imagination, a distinguished physician and teacher, who also wrote verse. He said, as well as Henle, all that could at the time be said in support of the germ theory of malarial and other fevers, and anticipated modern theories of immunity. The son has rescued from oblivion his father's account of the spinal arthropathies, clouded, though it is, by some unfortunate speculations and generalizations.

The decade following Weir Mitchell's return from Europe was devoted to a growing, but not too engrossing general practice, which left time for those experimental investigations in physiology, pharmacology, and toxicology which laid the foundations of his fame in experimental science. He was the first conspicuous example in this country of a medical reputation and career based upon and

determined largely by the devotion of the early professional years to the kind of work which we now call laboratory work, although there were no medical laboratories then in America.

In his address before the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland in 1877, Mitchell, while speaking of the value of such work in the training of the physician, evidently draws from his own experience when he says: "You ask me where, among medical men, we are to find those who have leisure for the work of the laboratory and for its side of scientific therapeutics. And to this I answer, there are long years of but partial occupation in the early life of every physician in which he can find ample time for such employment. Will it help or hurt him in his after life? The day has gone when a man may dare to be just only a prescribing doctor. It has gone, I trust, forever. Many years ago the late Prof. Samuel Jackson said to me most earnestly, 'If you want to practise medicine, do not venture to be an



experimental physiologist. It will ruin you.' I did not take his advice; and I dare now to counsel any young and able man among you that to spend a few years in such work is not only to give himself the best of intellectual training, but is also one of the best means of advancing himself and fortifying his position when by degrees he becomes absorbed in clinical pursuits and daily practice." These words are as true today as when they were spoken.

At the time when Mitchell began his professional career the Academy of Natural Sciences, instituted in 1812, was the most active centre of scientific work in Philadelphia. He was elected a member of this body in September, 1853, and two months later he read before the Academy his second published paper entitled, "On the Influence of Some States of Respiration upon the Pulse," which was published in abstract in the *Proceedings* of the Academy and in full the following year in *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences*. As early as January, 1855, he finds his char-

acteristic place as a member of the library committee.

Up to this time the contributions to the Academy had been mainly in the fields of descriptive and systematic zoölogy, botany, geology, and anthropology, but there now appeared a small group of young investigators interested in the experimental biological sciences. They established the short-lived Philadelphia Biological Society, which served its main purpose in leading the more conservative members to agree to the creation of a Biological Department of the Academy in March, 1858. Mitchell with Leidy, Hammond, Woodward, Morehouse, Hays, Harts-horne, Atlee, J. A. Meigs, Morris and others were among the petitioners for the organization of this department. Leidy was the first director, William A. Hammond the vice-director, and Mitchell was on the physiological committee, the following year succeeding to the vice-directorship, Leidy remaining in office.

At the first meeting, in April, 1858, of the

Biological Department, Mitchell presented the first paper on "Blood Crystals of the Sturgeon," with colored plates, and early the following year he again reported on blood crystals. It is interesting to recall how this early interest was renewed in recent years by the great work of Reichert on the crystallography of hemoglobin, which Mitchell did so much to further.

In 1854, and for several years following, Mitchell was lecturer upon physiology in the Philadelphia Association for Medical Instruction, an organization for extra-mural teaching of a type for which the city of Philadelphia was once famous.

In 1857, Mitchell was one of the founders of the Pathological Society, to which he presented the first specimen, of which he reminds us in his toast to the surviving members at the dinner commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the society.

If it be true, as he tells us, that he was late in developing—and I can scarcely credit it—he had by his twenty-eighth year surely and

fully arrived. One would like a pen picture from a competent contemporary of this period, but the record suffices to show the ardor, the industry, the fertility, the truly scientific spirit of the student of nature—qualities which remained undimmed until the end.

Preceding the turning point in Mitchell's career, in 1863, when he assumed medical charge of an army hospital for nervous diseases, he had published not less than twenty-two medical papers and reports, none of them clinical and nearly all in the domains of physiology, pharmacology, and toxicology. The first was in 1852 on the "Generation of Uric Acid"; all but three fell within the years 1858 to 1863 inclusive. The most important of these early publications, three being in association with Hammond and one with Morehouse, were concerned with the comparative anatomy and physiology of the respiratory and circulatory organs, and the toxicology of arrow and ordeal poisons and of snake venom. *The Report on the Progress*



of *Physiology and Anatomy*, published in 1858,<sup>1</sup> is of great value for the student of the history of physiology in this country.

We encounter at this early period Mitchell's singular faculty of observing and recording certain curious phenomena, some still awaiting explanation, such as the production of cataract in the frog by the ingestion of cane sugar,<sup>2</sup> the effect of mechanical stimulation of muscle, the nerve chiasm on the larynx of turtles, and later the insusceptibility of pigeons to morphine, and certain effects of freezing parts of the central nervous system.

I find also as early as 1858 an interesting and perhaps the first recorded example of that suggestiveness which was such a remarkable characteristic of Mitchell's mind. In November of that year he submitted to the Biological Department of the Academy of Natural Sciences a proposal for a collective investigation of the changes undergone by the white

<sup>1</sup> American Medico-Chirurgical Review, 1858, ii, 105.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard a few months before had made the same observation, but this was then unknown to Mitchell.

race in America and outlined a tentative plan to be followed. The proposal was favorably received and Mitchell was authorized to create a committee for the purpose. I cannot find that this interesting line of investigation, which in recent years especially has awakened renewed interest, was undertaken by Mitchell, but he has repeatedly touched upon the subject in his writings.

The most valuable of Mitchell's publications of the period we are now considering is his monograph of one hundred and fifty pages upon the venom of the rattlesnake, published in 1860 in the *Smithsonian Contributions*. Concerning this he says in the catalogue of his works printed in 1894: "This quarto with its many drawings was the result of four years of such small leisure as I could spare amidst the cares of constantly increasing practice. The story of the perils and anxieties of this research, embarrassed by want of help and by its great cost, is untold in its pages. It was the parent of renewed Indian researches. So far as the



habits, anatomy, and physiology of serpents are concerned, no one has bettered this work. An enormous addition was made in it to venom toxicology; . . . many questions of antidotes were set at rest. It contained, of course, errors, now corrected in the later researches of its author, and quite recently of the author and Prof. Reichert."

The investigation of the venom of serpents and its effects engaged the attention of Mitchell off and on for half a century, and indeed had interested his father, who transmitted to his son dried rattlesnake venom, some of which may still be in existence. Of the many valuable results of this prolonged experimental study, embodied in twelve papers and monographs, an epochal one is the first demonstration by Mitchell and Reichert, in 1883, of the so-called toxic albumins, to which class belong not only the snake venoms but also certain plant and especially bacterial poisons. The later classical researches of Flexner and Noguchi, culminating in Noguchi's fine volume on *Snake Venoms*,

owe their inception to the inspiration and support of Mitchell, aided by grants from the Carnegie Institution. I also owe to the suggestion of Mitchell a small research undertaken in my laboratory by Major Ewing, which led to the discovery of the power of venom to annul the bactericidal power of the blood, thereby explaining the quick onset of putrefaction following death from rattlesnake venom.

Mitchell's interest and activity in experimental science did not cease after he became identified with neurology. After 1863 he published at least ten physiological and about twenty-five pharmacological and toxicological papers. In this later period his physiological researches were mainly in the field of neurophysiology, among the more important contributions being those on the physiology of the cerebellum, in which he developed a view which was practically that advocated, much later, by Luciani, on cutaneous nerve supply, thus opening a field so successfully cultivated in recent years by

Head and others, and together with Lewis on tendon jerk and muscle jerk in a series of elaborate researches which have been the starting point for many interesting physiological and clinical studies. In Mitchell's purely neurological writings are to be found many observations, facts, and conclusions which are contributions to neurophysiology as well as to neuropathology, such as the influence of nerve lesions on nutrition, on local temperatures, on the various senses; the study of the effects of freezing his own ulnar nerve; the observation of crossed paralysis of the thermal sense without other sensory loss, and his views concerning fatigue and exhaustion of nerve cells as the result of peripheral irritation.

I have said these few words concerning the later physiological studies of Mitchell in order to indicate the important position which he holds among the physiologists of this country.

As the result of an accident, fortunate for physiological science, it fell to the lot of

Beaumont, beginning in 1825, to make a series of experiments upon gastric digestion which constitute the greatest contribution which America has made to physiology. Dunglison was an admirable teacher and author, but not an experimenter. The first systematic and fruitful cultivators of experimental physiology in this country were Mitchell and Dalton, whose work was practically contemporaneous up to the death of the latter in 1889. My colleague, Dr. Howell, a most competent judge, in an unpublished paper upon the history of American physiology, which he has permitted me to read, states that in the period before the establishment of laboratories by Bowditch and by Newell Martin, in the seventies, "probably the most significant name from the standpoint of physiological investigation is that of S. Weir Mitchell."

The creation of the American Physiological Society in 1887, which has greatly advanced this science in this country, was first suggested by Mitchell, who with Bowditch and Newell



Martin signed the call for the preliminary meeting. Among the many debts which physiology owes to Weir Mitchell should not be forgotten his readiness, whenever needed, to come to the defence of the experimental method of research upon which depends the advancement of both the science and the art of medicine.

In 1863, during the Civil War, came the great opportunity which determined Mitchell's subsequent career as a neurologist. For the first time in the history of warfare a number of military hospitals or wards were established by Surgeon-General Hammond for the study and treatment of special diseases and injuries incident to war. Mitchell and Morehouse, then acting assistant-surgeons, were placed in medical charge of the hospital for nervous diseases and injuries, located first in Christian Street and later in Turner's Lane, Philadelphia. It was Mitchell who suggested the establishment of this hospital, and secured the appointment as junior assistant of William W. Keen, then assistant-surgeon,

and his most efficient, devoted, and zealous co-worker.

The inspiring story of those days has been vividly told in this hall by Mitchell and Keen, and I shall not attempt to rehearse it. One is reminded of the almost feverish activities of the young Bichat in the Hotel Dieu by the work, until late hours of the night, of these three ardent investigators, minutely observing and recording in thousands of pages of notes phenomena often both new and interesting, analyzing, conferring, apportioning to each his share in working up the results. The opportunity was unique, and they seized it with full realization and utilization of its possibilities. "I think," said Dr. Mitchell a few years ago in his "toast" to the members of the Pathological Society, "we used well the terrible opportunities of those bloody sixties, and if you are today as enthusiastic, as industrious, and as fertile, you are to be congratulated."

Beginning with Circular No. 6, on "Reflex Paralysis," issued from the Surgeon-General's



Office in March, 1864, there followed a series of joint publications, the most important being the memorable volume on *Gun-shot Wounds and Other Injuries of Nerves*, (1864). That on "Malingering" (1865), and the experimental part of the paper on the "Antagonism of Morphia and Atropia," both interesting and valuable contributions, were mainly the work of Keen.

In 1872 Mitchell gathered together his observations, experiments, and conclusions in the largest and, in my judgment, the most significant and important of all his medical writings, the book entitled *Injuries of Nerves and Their Consequences*, to which a valuable addition was made by his son, Dr. John K. Mitchell, in a volume published in 1895 containing the subsequent histories of the surviving patients with additional illustrative cases. The study and description of peripheral nerve phenomena, especially those resulting from injury, constitute the largest, most original, distinctive, and important contribution of Weir Mitchell to neurology, and in this narrower

field his work is comparable to that of Duchenne and of Charcot upon diseases of the spinal cord.

The lean years and the period of hard struggle were now over. After the war Mitchell rapidly became and afterward remained the leading neurologist of America, and one of the most distinguished in the world. In 1870 he was instrumental in establishing the Infirmary for Nervous Diseases as a part of the Orthopedic Hospital, an institution which he has made famous. Here he found ample material for clinical study, and here for over forty years he taught and worked and created a school of able investigators and clinicians who have brought renown to American medicine.

The mere enumeration of Mitchell's discoveries and original observations in neurology—such as of postparalytic chorea; erythromelalgia; the reflex disorders due to eye-strain, in which he was aided by William Thomson; the unilateral hard edema of hysterical hemiplegia; the relation of pain to weather, and

others—affords no adequate conception of the extent and value of his work in this field. We shall all agree with Dr. Charles K. Mills, who with competent hand has set forth recently a brief summary and appreciation, that a “thorough and elaborate study of his neurological contributions is due to his memory.” This will be no easy task and will require much time, labor, and expert knowledge, so prolific was Mitchell’s pen and so suggestive, at times almost elusive, are thoughts and observations found often in a few sentences, sometimes a single one.

I have collected two hundred and forty-six references to books, papers, and reports by Mitchell from the *Index Medicus*, the *Index Catalogue*, medical journals, and his printed catalogue, which is incomplete even for the period covered, and I have no doubt the list exceeds two hundred and fifty. I classify one hundred and nineteen of these as neurological and fifty-two as physiological, pharmacological, and toxicological, the remainder being addresses and historical, bio-

graphical, pathological, and miscellaneous medical papers.

One of Mitchell's fascinating characteristics was his interest in and study of certain curious, out-of-the-way phenomena, often of as much psychological as neurological interest. His descriptions of ailurophobia, or cat-fear, of disorders of sleep, and of certain peculiar functional neurotic disorders may be cited as examples.

With what felicity of style, with what magic touch, with what lucid and sharp delineation did Mitchell often adorn his medical writings! Definitions of medical terms are not often set forth in such words as these: "As we are falling asleep the senses fall from guard in orderly and well-known succession—this interval I desire to label the *prædormitium*. When we begin to awaken, and the drowsied sentinels again resume their posts, there is a changeful time, during which the mind gradually regains possession of its powers—this interval I may call, in like fashion, the *postdormitium*." Nor does one often meet such



a description of a sensory hallucination as this: "Nearly every man who loses a limb carries about with him a constant or inconstant phantom of the missing member, a sensory ghost of that much of himself, and sometimes a most inconvenient presence, faintly felt at times, but ready to be called up to his perception by a blow, a touch, or a change of wind." Hundreds of similar happy phrases and descriptions may be found throughout his medical writings and addresses.

The admirably descriptive titles which Mitchell gave to his articles may appear to some a small matter, but it will not seem so to the cataloguer and the searcher of medical literature. How grateful to such a searcher is this one which only too often would have appeared under some such rubric as "a rare case:" "Reversals of habitual motions; backward pronunciation of words; lip whispering of the insane; sudden failures of volition; repetition impulses"!

As Dr. Mills remarks, "Mitchell is one of the few neurologists to whom well-deserved

fame has come because of his contributions to therapeutics." He is doubtless best known to the lay public, as well as to a large part of the profession, by the introduction of that method of treatment which goes by his name, and consists in the systematic employment of a number of agencies, chiefly rest, seclusion, full feeding, massage, and electricity. When one considers the brilliant success of this treatment in appropriate cases in the hands of Mitchell and others, the immense literature upon the subject, the direct and indirect bearings and implications of the method, and the stimulus which it has given to the study and relief of a large and difficult class of functional neurotic disorders, I believe it safe to say that the introduction of this Weir Mitchell treatment constitutes one of the great advances in therapeutics of modern times, and this I say with knowledge of diverging opinions and criticisms.

There are many aspects of the professional life and work of this extraordinarily able and versatile man, other than the physiological and



neurological, concerning which I should like to speak, and had expected to speak, did time permit, such as his valuable contributions to medical history, particularly in the remarkable address on the early history of instrumental precision in medicine, the recollections of the Civil War, and, above all, his fascinating and even surprising additions to our knowledge of Harvey, whom he admired above all men of medicine; his public addresses, unmatched for style, charm, and interest; his instructive talks to nurses; his biographical memoirs, like that of Dalton, to which I have referred; the delightful popular lectures, articles, and books, such as *Wear and Tear, or Hints for the Overworked*, which has gone through many editions since its first appearance in 1873, and the later *Doctor and Patient*; the researches of others stimulated and inspired by him, whereby he greatly multiplied his services to science and medicine; the many honors and recognitions which came to him here and abroad, and distinguished Mitchell above all physicians of America; his great services to medical

education as a member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, to whose great growth and prosperity he contributed so largely, and other institutions which he served in a similar capacity might also be included. It is needless in this hall, which bears his name, and before this audience for me to dwell upon his inestimable services to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, of which he became a Fellow in 1856, and which grew to be one of the dearest interests of his life. Here his name is perpetuated and here it will ever be treasured as the chief ornament and greatest benefactor of the College.

Representing officially on this occasion the National Academy of Sciences, I bring our tribute to the memory of the oldest member when he died, his election, due to his contributions to experimental science, dating from 1865. Through all these years he had been a regular attendant and frequent contributor at the meetings, his presence here, as elsewhere, always bringing cheer and inspiration. He will be sadly missed from our meetings.

At the fiftieth anniversary dinner of the Academy, last spring, Mitchell spoke delightfully of the past history of the Academy, his reminiscences of Joseph Henry being particularly interesting. At the semi-annual meeting in Baltimore, last November, Mitchell read the biographical memoir of his most intimate friend in the profession, Dr. John S. Billings. This memoir of a friend to whom, for over half a century, he had been devotedly attached, is significant as the last contribution of Weir Mitchell to medical literature.

I am commissioned to speak also in behalf of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, of which Mitchell was designated a trustee by the founder in 1902, and in the development of which he was deeply interested. From the beginning he was a member of the executive committee, and a most diligent and active one. He was especially effective in the furtherance of the biological work undertaken by the Institution, and scarcely less so in other directions. The Institution owes a large debt to the wise counsel and suggestive mind of Weir Mitchell.

However the verdict of history may modify contemporary judgments of the achievements of men, it cannot change the place which Dr. Mitchell holds in our affection and esteem. He was a great physician; our leader, endeared, admired; our friend and counselor, generous, wise, inspiring; a man of singular graces and accomplishments, active in advancing knowledge and in good works, a poet and man of letters, a sweetener of life to both sick and well. Happy such a life and happy the memories thereof which we shall ever cherish! As he said of Harvey, we may say of him—Weir Mitchell represented all that is best in the physician and the gentleman.



THE PRESIDENT: The third and last address will be that of his kinsman and near friend, bound to him by the double tie of blood and love of letters, MR. OWEN WISTER.





S. WEIR MITCHELL

MAN OF LETTERS

BY OWEN WISTER



ONCE, some years ago, as I was crossing Sixth Street at Chestnut, an approaching figure arrested my attention. He was about half a square away, opposite the door of Independence Hall. He was a lean man with a lean face, and seemed tall, vigorous, alert, and gray. His rough cap was gray, too, and gray the longish cape that hung from his shoulders; and distinction beacons from his whole appearance. My curiosity grew as he paused to contemplate Independence Hall. I decided he was a foreigner of note in the same second that whatever scales had been on my eyes fell, and I saw it was Dr. Mitchell.

We met, spoke for a moment, then went our separate ways; but I continued to think about him. Owing to some brief preoccupation, it had befallen me to see Dr. Mitchell *unlabelled*; but merely his appearance fifty yards off in the passing crowd had been label enough. In my turn I looked up at Independence Hall. "He and it match each other pretty well," I thought.

The life he had lived had chiselled his

features deep and fine. He had known the wolf at his door and had driven him off; he had carried upon his shoulders a family heavy with misfortune; he had triumphantly lived down patronizing distrust and indifference. To have weathered hardship courageously; to have benefited mankind signally; to have translated noble impulses into noble action all one's life—these golden deeds sculpture the human countenance with golden scars, as Dr. Mitchell's face was carved. What mark was left upon his books? In *Westways*, his last novel, Penhallow has gone to visit an indigent Baptist preacher; and at the sight of the three shabby volumes which constitute the man's whole library, Penhallow exclaims compassionately: "By George! that is sad. The man is book-poor . . . I will ask him to use mine." Dr. Mitchell himself had known the sadness of book-poverty; when book-riches came to him, he knew the joy of lending and giving. Throughout his tales are touches like this, born of the long, lean, hard years he had lived.

But beneath the generous scars in Dr. Mitchell's face lay something else, very special, plainly to be discerned not in him alone, but in great numbers of his generation. This is the deepest mark of all, this that he and a multitude of his fellow-countrymen bore; and as it was set upon the man, so is it set upon his books; not one is without it; it is mingled with the very essence of his writing.

Can not some of you remember old photograph albums of the sixties? Have you not sometimes, in some drawing-room, while you waited for your hostess to come down stairs, turned the leaves of such an album? I can think of one now. Among its ancient faces, quaint in old fashions, are pictures of soldiers—young soldiers generally; mere boys quite often. They wear sabres and visored caps and boots to their knees. Out of these small, dim, *carte-de-visite* album windows these boys look at us across fifty years. As we gaze at them the strange fancy comes that, could they open their lips and speak, they would all say the same thing; in their silence they



seem to share something of solemn import. Thousands of houses have such albums. If the photographs were colored, some of the uniforms would be blue, some gray, but in whatever color they are clad, the same look is in all these boys. Charleston and Richmond differ not from Boston and Philadelphia. No matter which the uniform of the young soldiers, the same beautiful, serious light shines upon their faces—the glow of dedication. Not on soldiers only did the Civil War thus set its seal, but upon all patriotic men and women also. And so that generation saw a vision that we see not, and wrote with a pen that never can be ours. Fined in a white-hot furnace, it emerged with eyes which had seen our country battling for her soul with naked sword. Through four long years that generation had witnessed this: how should it not thereafter look at the world, and time, and eternity, with a special gaze of its own? To Dr. Mitchell came hundreds of the maimed and wounded from that conflict. Wounds, blood, agony, and noble courage were for him

a daily sight. In hospitals he helped to save the men, or saw them die. Never could he be the same again. Whatever his thoughts thenceforth, deep down was that memory perpetual. During the last five days of his illness his wandering mind returned to those scenes; his wandering talk was of mutilation and bullets; he conversed and argued with that past. Therefore it is that when we read his tales and poems, no matter what be their subject, all come from a spirit over which had passed the great vision; every drop of ink is tintured with the blood of the Civil War.

More important even than genius to the novelist and the poet is his attitude toward life. We can only mark, we cannot measure, the effect of the Civil War upon Dr. Mitchell. With this first abiding influence is to be counted one other, from his forty-sixth year until the end—the voice which Stevenson has called the Critic on the Hearth. It cannot be known how much both of discretion and inspiration he owed to Mary Cadwalader Mitchell, his second wife. With her discern-

ment, her taste, and her right-mindedness went indomitable courage. He called her his best critic, because she could unmercifully condemn. She also, therefore, is ever present in all save his earliest pages.

He waited a long while before stepping out into the open with his first volume. While still in his twenties he had sent to a Boston publisher a collection of youthful verse. This was submitted to Dr. Holmes. Dr. Holmes advised the young poet to hide Literature in his desk until Medicine were full grown. Forty was the age he set. The poet waited longer, and most of that early verse was burned. The poet was a person who not only could give good advice, but could take it. He was fifty-one before a volume of three prose tales, bearing his name on its title-page, announced that he had begun the practice of his second profession. He had already been practising it anonymously for some time. About the year 1857 some unsigned verses of his, sent by his father to a daily paper, mark his first appearance in print. They

were entitled *Herndon*. They celebrated this sea-captain's noble conduct and heroic self-sacrifice in shipwreck. The last verses Dr. Mitchell ever wrote—the very last—celebrated the last Christmas that he ever saw. Verse was his earliest utterance—and his farewell; he entered literature with a song of heroism, he left it singing to the Star of Bethlehem. Between these two shining gates stretches a road fifty-six years long, marked by more than forty separate publications in verse and prose—thirty-five of these since 1880.

The early stages of this road are naturally less crowded; Dr. Mitchell was sticking to the advice of Dr. Holmes, and he was hard at work day and night as a physician. On December 2, 1861, the Rev. Dr. William H. Furness writes to his friend Emerson:

MY DEAR R. W.:

I send you a copy of some verses which, when read to me the other day by Mrs. Wister, struck me as smooth and lively enough to grace the pages of the *Atlantic*. They are the work of a young doctor here

who makes no pretences (Mitchell by name; he married the only daughter of Alfred Elwyn, whom you recollect). He does not wish to put his name to them. So please regard them as anonymous. If you think them worthy will you send them to the editor—I don't know who the editor is.

And Emerson replies:

CONCORD, 13 February.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I passed through Philadelphia very sadly the other day that I could not stop . . . I was the more vexed, because I have hived some quite novel experiences at Washington for your ear. But the instant errand was to exculpate myself of neglect of your letter. I had at once carried the verses on "Strasburg Clock" to Fields, who agreed to print them, and they were to appear in the March number. But something hindered this, and they are, I understand, to appear in April.

And Dr. Furness replies:

FEBRUARY 17, '62.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

Thanks for your kind care of the "Strasburg Clock." The author, an unpretending and right lovable man, is son-in-law of Alfred Elwyn, whom you remember. I was taken with the verses partly because they came from so unexpected a quarter.



That word “unexpected” throws light upon how dark Dr. Mitchell was keeping verse in his desk—how well he was taking Dr. Holmes’ advice.

The sinking of the *Cumberland*, a disaster of the Civil War, inspired him during this same year of 1862 with a fine lyric.

Gray swept the angry waves  
    O’er the gallant and the true,  
Rolled high in mounded graves  
    O’er the stately frigate’s crew—  
Over cannon, over deck,  
Over all that ghastly wreck—  
    When the Cumberland went down.

And forests old, that gave  
    A thousand years of power  
To her lordship of the wave  
    And her beauty’s regal dower,  
Bent, as before a blast,  
When plunged her pennoned mast,  
    And the Cumberland went down.

And stern vikings that lay  
    A thousand years at rest,  
In many a deep blue bay  
    Beneath the Baltic’s breast,  
Leaped on the silver sands  
And shook their rusty brands,  
    As the Cumberland went down.



In 1864, *The Children's Hour*, of which he was part author, and, later, *Fuzbuz, the Fly*, a second fairy-book, were published, both in aid of the Sanitary Commission. His next experiment was a new one—he never grew tired of new experiments—a tale in the *Atlantic Monthly* for July, 1866.

While talking with his friend Mr. Henry Wharton, about the Civil War hospitals, he spoke of a man who, in the fight at Mobile Bay, had lost both legs and both arms—and survived. Mr. Wharton whimsically suggested that fragments of the torso's psychic self might well have departed with these limbs. From this grew *The Case of George Dedlow*. While still undecided what name to give the torso, Dr. Mitchell saw one day as he stood on a step in Price Street, German-town, the name Dedlow on a jeweller's shop across the way; and Dedlow seemed to fit a legless man. Like the "Strasburg Clock" verses, this story was lent to Mrs. A. L. Wister, who showed it to her father, the Rev. Dr. Wm. H. Furness. Without Dr. Mitchell's

knowledge he sent it to Edward Everett Hale, then editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. A check for eighty dollars, with the proof-sheets, was the first that the author knew of his story's fate. It was not the last! Dr. Mitchell had written *The Case of George Dedlow* in a strictly documentary tone until its fantastic conclusion. This ought to have undeceived any one. But in the September *Atlantic* appeared a leading article on the subject, following which charitable checks began to flow into Philadelphia for the relief of the afflicted but wholly imaginary torso. To trace all the contributors proved impossible, and the money thus remaining unreturned was given to the Sanitary Commission.

In an essay entitled "Phantom Limbs," published in 1871, Dr. Mitchell seriously discusses a real phenomenon which never ceased to interest the medical side of his genius. To this early time belong three other essays, "Wear and Tear," "Camp Cure," and "Nurse and Patient," all which their author signed; he counted them as doctor's work, not as

belonging to his second profession. To literature, nevertheless, they do also belong, because of their direct, agreeable style.

Dr. Mitchell's style in these early medical essays had benefited from the exercise of making verse; from good reading; and from civilized company who possessed the tradition of sound idiomatic English.

From the printing of *Herndon*, in 1857, until 1880, he practised literature anonymously, verses and tales being dotted along through this period more thickly as it draws to its close, most of these being published in the *Atlantic Monthly* or in *Lippincott's Magazine*. And now, medicine being entirely grown up, and Dr. Holmes' advice faithfully obeyed, Dr. Mitchell signed the volume entitled *Hephzibah Guinness*. The first of its three tales turns upon the inheritance of insanity; its scene is laid in Philadelphia, in 1807. Here is a passage from it, at the point where the hero has just learned of his hereditary taint, news to him supremely terrible,

because it forbids his marrying the lady of his heart:

“His walk took him along the willow margin of the river, and at last across the floating bridge at Gray’s Ferry, and so up to the high ground which lay back of Woodlands. At first there was in all his heart a sea of nameless passion, pent up for years, and only set free for a moment, to be ordered at the next into quiet by a voice to him as potent as that which stilled the raging waters of Galilee. Then came for a while, or at intervals, that strange sense of being morally numbed which is like the loss of feeling mercifully bestowed on the physical system by the blow of the lion’s paw. At last, out of the confusion order began to come, and painful capacity to study in detail his own sensations, and to look, though but unsteadily, at the need for decision. Here also he began to take note of outside things, and to see with curious intensity natural objects, from memories of which would come forth in after-days all the large horror of the sorrow to which they had become linked by Nature’s

mysterious bonds of association. Thus he noted, whether he would or not, the miserly little squirrels, and the rustling autumn woods thick with leafy funerals, through which the lated robin flew in haste."

That is a passage written with the pen of the doctor held in the hand of the poet—it reveals the writer's love of local atmosphere, from which he drew so much of his material, early and late; and an attitude toward life, tender, grave, religious, and seasoned with experience and retrospect as no young man's could possibly be. Through passages like this the reader learns that he is in no ordinary presence; and whatever more of the writer's art was learned by its industrious exercise in the many volumes to follow this first one, maturity was already here. Two years later, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Dr. Mitchell published his first novel, *In War Time*. It was written at Newport, during the summer, which season came to be his habitual time for writing down the tales and verses he had been meditating. He wrote rapidly, and



always with his own hand. *Hugh Wynne* was written in six weeks; but he had been seven years studying and making notes for it.

Were it not too long, I should read the beginning of the fourth chapter of *In War Time*, which dwells for two pages upon the changes wrought upon the medical profession by our Civil War. But I quote some briefer and very characteristic passages, showing again the maturity with which these early books were written. In fact I am tempted to say that construction alone was learned later:

“No man knew better than he how to use his intellect to apologize to himself for lack of strict obedience to the moral code by which his profession justly tests the character of its own labor.” “And wiped from his brow the sweat which marks the earning of death, as of bread.” “Could we hear all that is said behind our backs, existence would be nearly impossible except for the few, who would then make what is left of it intolerable.” “There are delicate overtones of unselfishness which belong only to the purest and sweetest natures



refined by the truest good-breeding. They are the very poetry of social conduct." These comments, meditative and fanciful, plainly herald those two later books, *Characteristics* and *Dr. North and His Friends*, in which comment is dramatized and strung upon a thread of plot.

In Dr. Mitchell's thirty or forty short stories, plot is often the main thing, and his invention supplies it freely; in his thirteen novels, plot is mostly of slight concern, interest being generally in analysis of character and the atmosphere or the era that he depicts. Sustained architectural development, the working out of a principal underlying theme, such as in *Tom Jones*, was not easy for him; yet in *Constance Trescott* he achieved this; and if symmetry is the gauge of excellence, this novel is his best. He thought it so. His construction is apt to ramble: as in *François*, deliberately, after the picaresque pattern; or in a leisureliness sometimes too casual tracing month by month the fortunes of his people. Violent events, such as occur in

*Far in the Forest*, are outnumbered by the less accentuated features of average existence. He drew his material from various sources—his own memories of Pike County, of his year in Paris, of the hospitals and the War, of New England holidays; and from diaries and documents, as in *The Red City* and *Hugh Wynne*; from anecdotes told him by friends, as in *Roland Blake*; and from his medical experience. This gave him most of his penetrating observation and some of his personages. He drew but a single portrait consciously from life—his sister being the original; but he knew, as any novelist knows, that every character is distilled from the social nourishment of the writer just as directly as our flesh and blood come from the meals we have eaten.

Dr. Mitchell never quite found himself in his dialogue, which lacks the shading and flexibility of nature; or yet in his narrative prose, which often resembles the prose of essay rather than of fiction; yet in spite of this and the usually quiet action of his novels,

their success increased until with *Hugh Wynne* it became a popular triumph—and was heard of in Wales, where many real original Wynnes are buried. There, once, in a graveyard, the sexton pointed out their tombs to Dr. Mitchell, not knowing who he was, and said that the present head of the family now lived in America and his name was Hugh Wynne.

No tale of our Revolution has approached it, or is so well remembered; and thereafter a wide audience waited for every new novel by Dr. Mitchell.

They never waited so for his poems; yet in poetry his best is to be found; it holds company with the best our American Muse has sung. His first volume followed his first novel in 1883, and showed him nearer to the heart of verse than of prose. None but a true poet could have written

“The perfect pearls of life’s young dream  
Dissolved in manhood’s tears.”

Four years later his second volume led a critic in *The Nation* to say that it seemed like

“the work of a man whose whole soul was in the poetic art, and who never had looked in any other intellectual direction.” Much was written after 1887—*The Cup of Youth*, *A Psalm of Deaths*, *The Mother*, *The Wager*, *Pearl*, *The Comfort of the Hills*, *Barabbas*—this in his eighty-fifth year—enough in all to fill two volumes, presently to be published. Of these he spoke to me in the last talk we ever had. In his own judgment, *Villon*, *Drake*, the *Ode on a Lycian Tomb*, *The Seagull*, and *Magnolia* are his best. But what an industry, what a life! The mere calendar is vertiginous—here is a piece of it: *Hugh Wynne*, 1898; *Adventures of François*, 1899; *Dr. North and His Friends*, 1900; *The Wager*, 1900; *Circumstance*, 1901; *When All the Woods Are Green*, 1901, with seven articles and lectures wedged into this same period—thus through fifty-six years grew a shelf of books larger and better than many a writer’s who has done nothing else, and by the side of this another shelf of medical works, and an active practice, and original research and contri-



butions to medical science and treatment, and a permanent international fame! He never talked about the *sacredness* of labor, but the *joy* of it. Winter and summer he worked—him, fortunately, the unions could not control! And because he so loved work, thus could he sing of idleness:

There is no dearer lover of lost hours  
Than I.  
I can be idler than the idlest flowers;  
More idly lie  
Than noonday lilies languidly afloat,  
And water pillowed in a windless moat.  
And I can be  
Stillier than some gray stone  
That hath no motion known.  
It seems to me  
That my still idleness doth make my own  
All magic gifts of joy's simplicity.

A city of good doctors owes to the influence of Dr. Mitchell that high tone which the profession has maintained through an era of declining standards. What is our literature's true debt to him?

I cannot suppose that I am the only person here who keeps the books that he has read in

a sort of mental library. Such a room is to be found in the house in my brain, and during wakeful hours and other times of meditation, I am apt to enter it. Sometimes I make a change in the arrangement of the books—but not often. The manner in which they are classified upon the shelves would puzzle a librarian—the novels particularly. What determined my grouping formerly, made neighbors of Scott, Daudet, Dickens, Tourgénéff, Hugo, Hawthorne, Brontë, and many more, all poets at heart; while in quite another street lived *Tom Jones*, *Barchester Towers*, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, *Cousine Bette*, with a large company issuing from hearts that were strictly prose. But my present and final system uproots all this. Trollope, for example, is torn from Balzac to live with Scott, from whom I have felt compelled to remove Tourgénéff and Hawthorne. Where, then, do *Hugh Wynne* and *Westways* go? Though written by a poet at heart, they stand with Trollope and Fielding, because they are friendly to mankind. They belong to what I



call the Literature of Encouragement; they are written with sympathy, not with misanthropy.

It is preposterous to suppose that any Balzac or Flaubert or de Maupassant knew more of evil and sorrow and pain than Dr. Mitchell. Four years of mutilated soldiers and fifty of hysteria, neurosis, insanity, and drug mania, unrolled for him a hideous panorama of the flesh, the mind, and the soul. But when in one of his books he makes a doctor say: "Who dares draw illness as it is? Not I," he gives the clue to his fiction. He omits nothing needful, it is the superfluous that he discards. Just as minutely as Flaubert described the horrible arsenic death of Emma Bovary, could Dr. Mitchell have painted a dozen or a score of revolting ends; just as cruelly as Balzac drew the moral deterioration of Père Goriot, Dr. Mitchell could have gloated over his own victims of deterioration. His novels abound with studies of decay. *Hugh Wynne* and *Circumstance* offer us senile change; *Roland Blake*, hysteria; *Far in the Forest*, the insanity

of persecution; *In War Time* and *Constance Trescott*, the progressive moral rotting of their chief characters—nor does this finish the list. But these studies are not hostile; the author does not take open or secret pleasure in the ills wherewith the face of man is blackened. Consider what we should have had if Balzac or Flaubert or Zola had known what Dr. Mitchell knew about women!

But he emerges from his own hard early struggle and his long experience of human excrescences, writing the *Literature of Encouragement* not *Discouragement*. No matter through what dark alleys his muse passed, what mud she had to cross, she comes to us always with her skirts clean and her heart warm. She wishes us well, not ill; she gives no sneer at the evil in the world, she is sorry for it; her gospel is not of hate but of love.

The tone of Dr. Mitchell's books is a lesson and a tonic for an age that is sick and weak with literary perverts.

This is our literature's true debt to him.











